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MALE FARMERS COPING WITH LOSS OF SPOUSE: IMPACTS ON FARMING
OPERATION AND FAMILY LIFE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the
College of Agriculture
at the University of Kentucky

By

Daniel Oakley Wilson

Campton, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Patricia H. Dyk, Director, Center for Leadership Development

Lexington, Kentucky

2012

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MALE FARMERS COPING WITH

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

MALE FARMERS COPING WITH THE LOSS OF SPOUSE: IMPACTS ON FARMING OPERATION AND FAMILY LIFE

Losing a spouse is as devastating an experience anyone will ever deal with in his or her life. Research, however, shows that men have a harder and longer time coping with the loss of a spouse than women. When the widower's profession is farming, there are no resources to specifically help that individual with their loss. The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the lives of widowed farmers with particular focus on transitions in their farming operation and their family life. Through their stories, we learn what is happening before the loss of the female spouse on the farm, during the bereavement period, and how the farmer handles the situation after the bereavement period has ended. Findings indicate that the Cooperative Extension Service can play a major role in supporting our widowed farmers as they seek a new normal for their farm operation and family life. Also, farming widowers have more stress following the loss of a spouse due to the added aspect of managing the farm and the home simultaneously after the passing of their spouse. Recommendations include further expanding spousal bereavement materials to include a section for males and in particular farming widowers.

KEYWORDS: Farming Widower, Loss of Spouse, Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis, Cooperative Extension Service, Coping

Daniel O. Wilson

10/29/2012

MALE FARMERS COPING WITH LOSS OF SPOUSE: IMPACTS ON FARMING
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Being an American farmer is sometimes viewed publicly as being a great profession to balance work, family, and life. However, authors have found that farming is different from other professions because it has its own discrete set of values including resistance to change, traditional gender roles, strong work ethic, and self-sufficiency (Danes & Rettig, 1993). This strong rural farm culture includes expectations about the business and family roles of wives and husbands steeped in tradition and identity laden (Weigel, Weigel, Berger, Cook, & Delcampo, 1995). When one of those spousal roles is taken away via death, the dynamic of the farming situation is disrupted. Not surprisingly, Holmes and Rahe's (1967) landmark research on challenging life events found that the number one stressful event is the loss of the spouse.

Research, however, shows that the male widowers have a harder and longer time coping with the loss of a spouse than the female widow. A number of studies indicate that the loss of spouse is related to increases in depression, physical illness, and mortality and that these health consequences of marital bereavement tend to be more severe for men than for women (Helsing, Szklo, & Comstock, 1981; Kaprio, Koshenvuo, & Rita, 1987; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1983; Umberson, Wortman, & Kessler, 1992). Yet approximately 80% of widowed individuals in the United States are women (Fields & Casper, 2001).

Subsequently, the vast majority of research focuses on the challenges faced by widows and little data is available on bereaved widowers. Although many researchers have shown that older men and women cope differently with

widowhood, few studies have focused solely on older widowers or on the variability of this group (Balaswamy & Richardson, 2001). With the lack of researchable data on the bereaved older male widower, it is not surprising that there is little to none research on the challenges faced by the American male farmer after the loss of his spouse. To understand the context for this study of Kentucky widowed farmers, a brief description of Kentucky agriculture will set the scene for the accounts given by participants.

Agriculture in Kentucky

Kentucky is considered one of the most diverse states for farming practices, with the state separated into three different geological areas for production. The western part of the state is primarily flat land used for row crop production such as corn, soybeans, wheat, etc. The central part of the state is less flat and has rolling hills that are best suited for crops and livestock production, beef cattle, dairy herds, and horses. The eastern side of the state is the most diverse because of its connection with the Appalachian Mountains; it is steeper and can be used for livestock, crops, and timber production.

The main cash crop in Kentucky for several decades was tobacco. It was the staple for several counties in Kentucky until the enactment of the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004. The “tobacco buyout” was a \$10 billion federal buyout of the old Depression-era tobacco program that had price fixes on the demand of the market, leaving farmers with no room to expand their operations because of quota caps on the industry. The buyout eliminated those quotas and compensated the farmer at \$7 per pound at their current levels of quota. Farmers could choose to

take a lump sum payment at the time of the buyout or spread the payments over a period of 10 years. This act of legislation dramatically changed the landscape of Kentucky agriculture forever, drastically cutting the level of tobacco production in the state. According to the United States Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistical Service, tobacco farms in Kentucky, “declined 72 percent since 2002 to 8,113 total farms, according to the census. Tobacco acres harvested fell 21 percent from 2002.”

Nationally, Kentucky ranks very highly in several agricultural production areas. Listed below are several areas in which Kentucky ranks highly demonstrating the diversity of the state farming practices. In 2008, Kentucky had total cash receipts in Agriculture at \$4.29 billion.

The national rankings of Kentucky’s agricultural products are listed in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 National Kentucky Agricultural Products Rankings

#2 in Tobacco Production
#8 in Beef Cattle Production
#8 in Broiler Poultry Production
#11 in Hay Production
#13 in All Cattle Production
#14 in Corn Production for Grain
#17 in Soybean Production for Beans
#20 in Winter Wheat Production

Source: USDA NASS website <http://www.nass.usda.gov/index.asp>

The lives of full-time farmers are often secluded somewhat from the outside world, focusing their time on their farming operation and family often with miles between them and their nearest neighbor. Therefore, some of the support options that a widower might have access to in an urban setting are likely much different from the farming male. Farming is characterized by a distinct set of values: self sufficiency of the family unit, a strong work ethic, the importance of family and community integration, farming as a valued child rearing environment, attachment to the family farm, traditional gender roles, resistance to change, and religiosity (Swisher, Elder, Lorenz, & Conger, 1998). Most family farms are not comparable to any other social group. With the intimacy of the farming lifestyle come difficulties in processing information for the farmer during stressful events. “It is likely that farmers interpret and respond to stressors differently than do other groups”

(Swisher et al. 1998, p. 74). With the lack of researchable data on the male farming widower, how these men handle their family status, farming operations, a friendship etc., during and after the loss of their spouse is a field ripe for harvest.

Loss of Spouse

As noted in the introduction, the loss of a spouse is rated the most stressful event in the life of a married individual. Hence, the bereavement period is of great interest to researchers who are striving to understand how best to assess widows and widowers in coping with their loss. Although researchers have shown that men and women cope differently with widowhood, most studies have focused on women, and there is a lack of research on widowers who are farmers. To give background to this current study, literature examining spousal bereavement in women and men will be discussed. Then, since family-farm operations are a subset of family-owned businesses, the literature addressing the loss of spouse in these situations where the boundaries between work and family are blurred and the loss of a spouse is a crisis for both the family and work contexts.

When dealing with the loss of a spouse, it must be noted that not all marriages are the same; people are different in how they love, grieve, and generally deal with situations that arise in one's lifetime. Research has shown that men have a harder time dealing with the loss of a spouse than widows. Brown, Brown, House and Smith (2008) concluded that the loss of spouse later in life has been described as one of the most stressful events ever encountered. When describing the bereavement process as stated in Hamilton (2005), "grief is not a linear process with concrete boundaries, but rather a composite of overlapping fluid phases that

vary from person to person” (p. 214). There is no way to predict the transitions between normalcy-bereavement-and back to normalcy when dealing with spousal loss, making the assessment process difficult.

Research Objectives

Thus, this study was designed to gain insight into the lives of widowed farmers with particular focus on transitions in their farming operation and their family life. Through their stories, we learn what is happening before the loss of the female spouse on the farm, during the bereavement period, and how the farmer handles the situation after the bereavement period has ended. A goal of this study is to assess how the Cooperative Extension Service can be a resource for the farming male widower after the loss of his spouse.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Spousal Bereavement in Women

Notably, there is substantially more information on women losing the men in a relationship to death due to the simple fact that women tend to outlive men. In their study, "The feminization of bereavement among community dwelling older adults," Williams, Baker, Allman, and Roseman (2006) demonstrated that women are more likely to face bereavement in ages 65 and older than men. Statistically, in the United States 50% of women over the age of 65 and 70% of women over the age of 75 are widowed currently (Reisman, 2001).

Widows are faced with different feelings and worries than men once the male spouse has been lost. Kaunonen, Paivi, Paunonen, and Erjanti (2000) found that widows felt a greater degree of helplessness, worried about the tasks their husbands used to conquer, saw their husband in a protective role, were in greater distress, and had more apprehension and a greater fearfulness amongst themselves. Kaunonen et al.'s (2000) study as previously mentioned concluded that, "The most important things in the widows' grief was the worry of how to survive (26%), things concerning illness and death (18%), loneliness (17%), loss of a relationship (12%) and the loss of a long life together (10%)" (p. 131). It must be noted that when conducting qualitative or quantitative research on the bereaved male and female, women are more forthcoming with their information than men, possibly skewing the results. "In our society men are expected to control their emotions whereas women are allowed, perhaps even expected, to show their feelings" (Stroebe, Stroebe, & Abakoumkin, 1999, p. 9). To really emotionally break down in an

interview or discussion about a lost loved one is more likely to happen with a woman than a man.

As stated in Stroebe et al. (1999), “Women are more likely to have close confining relationships with persons other than their spouses and to be the ones to nurture and sustain the couple’s social relationships with others” (p. 2). The woman tends to be the social glue that holds the couple’s convivial status intact. Upon the passing of a spouse, the widow has a better social pool to rely on during the initial and extended bereavement period.

One of the distinct disadvantages of spousal loss for women is they tend to receive more financial support from marriage than men; once that has been taken away in death, it becomes more of an economic problem for women than men (Pudrovskaya, Schieman, & Carr, 2006).

Spousal Bereavement in Men

Men on the other hand have a somewhat different response to bereavement. Research has shown that gender and bereavement have a different effect depending on the situation, the reason for the bereavement, and the long-term strains on a person’s life. These differences are variously distinctive depending on the reason for the grief. Rubin and Schechter (1999) found that,

Males have more difficulty expressing emotion following loss, and that instrumental behavior rather than affective expression may disproportionately characterize their bereavement responses. The propensity of men to deny their feelings and thus fail to work through elements of their loss is exacerbated by the societal expectation that men will subordinate emotional distress to the needs of their work. (p. 280)

Martin and Doka (2000) noted that men were less likely to “exhibit strong emotions and more likely to evoke distractions such as work, play or alcohol” (p.

100). The perception of a man is that he is strong in physical and emotional stature in society. When grieving occurs in a male's life, conversing with him is much more difficult because of those strong perceptive tendencies. Men are seen as much harder to comfort but more likely to function normally in social situations (Martin & Doka, 2000).

To gain a better understanding of the bereavement process in men, Chen et al. (1999) conducted a study of 92 widows and 58 widowers over a two-year period. At the six-month period of bereavement, they concluded that widowers were more likely to have high anxiety disorders and report suicidal thoughts more often than widows. In contrast, the widows had higher levels of physical health problems (cancer, heart attacks etc.).

Further, Kaunonen and his colleagues (2000) found from a study of 897 widowed men and women beyond 6 months with an age range of 25-65 years that "widowers grief focused on survival (26%) and loneliness (26%), the loss of a long life together (16%), illness and death (10%) and the loss of a relationship (9%)." Widowers have also reported lower levels of well-being than married men, and higher rates of depression than widows depending on the duration of the bereavement (Balaswamy & Richardson, 2001, p. 312).

One explanation of men having a harder time dealing with the loss of a spouse is that men tend to "bottle it up" when referring to their emotions. As stated in Bennett, Hughes, and Smith (2003), "men believe it is important to maintain emotional self-control in public (defined as all situations where they are not alone)" (p. 410). Research has also shown that bereaved widowers are at a greater risk for

rapid health declines than non-widowers. However, the health decline concern has a steep curve in that after the first year of spousal loss those vulnerabilities diminish considerably. As stated in Fitzpatrick, Spiro, Kressin, Greene, and Bosse (2001):

For widowers, during the first six to twelve months following the death of their spouse, an increase in mortality rate is experienced primarily from coronary heart disease, infectious diseases, accidents and suicide, but the rate of death declines after the first year. (p. 219)

Richardson and Balaswamy (2001) also stated that “when researchers compare widowers to married men, widowers usually report more depression and suicidal ideation and they have higher mortality rates, especially during the first six months of bereavement” (p. 130). The initial shock of the loss in the earlier days, weeks, and months determines how the bereaved transitions out of that deep grieving stage. The rate of depressive symptoms in recently bereaved men is four times higher compared to married men (Balaswamy & Richardson, 2001). The length of which men experience depressive symptoms from the loss of a spouse can persist up to and beyond three years (Brown et al., 2008).

The death of a spouse for a male may also result in gender role reversals in the home and family, especially in a traditional gender role relationship where the man is securing the income and the female is a stay-at-home spouse. “If widowhood takes away some masculine roles, permanently or temporarily, it also gives men more feminine ones” (Bennett, 2003, p. 410). Bennett (2003) also stated that, “men have to find ways of tackling domestic work, whether by doing it themselves or negotiating for someone else to do it-both of which are women’s work” (p. 410). Masculinity for the male can be blamed for some of the bereavement issues in men. Bennett (2003) stated that “men may not request help, since it would threaten the

ideals of capability and control or men may not be offered help, since they are viewed as strong, capable, and in control” (p. 411). Brabert, Forsyth, and Meloncon (1992) found that men were less likely to seek help from others but they were more likely to return to work sooner, date more quickly, and remarry. During the loss of a spouse, men have been known to find solace in exercise, religion, work, poetry, or alcohol (Martin & Doka, 2000).

One means of assisting a bereaved male through the initial sadness and depression can be with social support. Mutran, Reitzes, Mossey, and Fernandez (1995) defined social support as a “mechanism that reduces the severity of stress by providing an opportunity for clarification through resources provided by others of the stressful event thus allowing the individual a means of adjusting or recovering from a difficult situation” (p. 355) Relying on what is already in place is a big part of helping anyone through a death or highly stressful event. The key to this support working for the widowers can be knowing which socially supportive group to turn to when a stressor occurs. Bereaved men need “reinforcement and feedback from others help to maintain the individual’s self-esteem and self-worth while validating and recognizing the difficulty of the situation” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2001, p. 219). Social support also decreases the severity of depression in widowers. “It has been suggested that the loss of social contacts, and in particular confiding relationships, accounts for increased depression in widowhood” (Bennett, Hughes, &Smith, 2003, p. 410).

Again, since this study is specific to farm widowers, it is helpful to understand the family farming context within which a health crisis may occur.

Health Crises on Family Farms

Losing a loved one is never easy for anyone. When dealing with the loss of a family member on the farm, the implications have a more stringent focus due to the fact that farming family lives seem to weave between families and farm seamlessly. As stated in Scheerer and Brandt (2001), “one of the primary ways in which farm families differ from most families is in the intertwining of work with everyday life.” (p. 76). This level of non-separation on a day-to-day basis is a problem when an accident occurs on the farm or upon death. The ramifications have different meanings than in normal circumstances :

Because of the demanding nature of their work, farm families are not able to take much, if any, time off to deal with issues after a death in the family. To maintain income, animals need to be fed, dairy herds need to be milked, and crops must be planted, tended and harvested. (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 76)

One assistive source that seems to be different for farming families compared to non-farm families during a time of crisis is the neighborly support farming community's show with the physical aspects of the profession. Rosenblatt and Karis (1993) conducted a study titled “Economics and family bereavement following a fatal family accident” that looked at 21 farming families and how they coped with the loss. They noted that the one thing that is always different during a farming operation crisis when compared to normal crises is the social support of the labor requirements of the operation. In this particular study, Rosenblatt and Karis (1993) generalized a few of their participants' responses to conclude that “a few widows experienced long term economic help (in terms of chores, help with farm management, and even financial support) from parents, parents-in-law, a brother-in-law, or a neighbor” (p. 41). Rosenblatt and Karis (1994) noted in their “Family

distancing following a fatal farm accident” study that the majority of support that farming families receive after or during a crisis is considered community support, but a substantial amount of that is from kin. Having neighborly help is not always a good thing during a crisis. Robertson, Murphy, and Davis (2006) found from their participants that they worried about safety on the farm for volunteers, the time it takes to train those volunteers, a view of their operation they might have never seen before (changing people’s perception of the family in crisis), the loss of privacy, and a strong concern over farming debts owed and accruing.

The pressure that can ensue after the initial shock of the crisis on the farming operation usually takes considerable tolls on the family as well. It is during this time period that farming families can become what research calls “family distant.”

Family distancing is the perception from one family member that another family member is distancing himself or herself from the family after the crisis occurred.

The familial distancing problem is duly noted by Rosenblatt and Karis (1994). They identified five factors crucial to identifying, accepting, and constructively correcting the family issue: (1) blame and distance in the family grief process, (2) economic aftermath of an accident, (3) family differences over the expression of grief, (4) the unavailability of the bereaved, and (5) the tenuous nature of in-law relationships.

In some instances, the farming operation does not survive the aftermath of the loss of spouse crisis. When the crisis happens to the farming operator, the farm faces considerable difficulties in surviving. Farms are liquidated, sold, transferred to an intergenerational family member, or leased when the new farm manager is

thrown into the operational chair. One of the widowed participants in the Rosenblatt and Karis (1993) study summed up this dilemma:

There was no way that I was able to continue farming. Our youngest son was in the service, and the two boys and the girl lived far away from home. And the other boys were in jobs away from home so everyone had their own work to do. So two weeks after the funeral I had sold the beef cattle, because there was no way I could take care of them and then I had a farm auction because there was no one going to be taking over. (p. 42)

In most cases where the farming manager is either injured or deceased, the first reaction of the new primary operator and close family members is that there is no way they will ever sell the farm. Over time, when the realization of the situation settles, the most attractive option is to sell or transfer the farm.

Loss of spouse (death of husband). As highlighted earlier, the loss of a spouse is one of the most stressful and life-altering events in people's lives. When a farming operation is faced with widowhood, the initial grief, bereavement, and progression back to normalcy is a different path than other non-farming families. Males represent almost all cases of spousal loss due to accidental death on a farm because the man is typically the primary farming operator. The primary operator faces the brunt of the danger in the profession because he has daily exposure to accidents.

Upon the passing of a husband on the farm, there are several things that become primary concerns for the wives of the deceased and the farming operation. Scheerer and Brandt (2001) conducted a study called "Interviews with widows following fatal farming accidents." This study looked at wives who had lost their spouses due to farm-related injuries/accidents in Kentucky. The results of the study

identified eight areas that widows must address upon the passing of their farming spouse.

Economics and Decision Making. "Following the death, the widows were faced with critical economic decisions about how to continue the farm work and maintain income." (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 78.). Some of the widows in the study had to make decisions on reducing farm acreage, leased land on the farm, and reduced livestock or crop acres. The interesting thing about these results is that money was not mentioned as the main reason for these decisions; rather, the downsizing of the farm was based on being able to balance the workload between themselves and family members.

Stress. "Worries and fears of making poor decisions related to economics and management of the farm work. Their emotional responses to stress such as crying, anxiety, and insomnia were often linked to or increased by their responsibilities with the farm." (Scheerer & Brandt, 2011, p. 79). Stress is a strong catalyst on anyone during the loss of a spouse, but the compounding tasks of immediately being thrown into operating mode on the farm are daunting to a farming widow.

Maintaining the Farm. "The farm was a connection of home, family, work, and income, which provided livelihood, purpose, common goals, and sense of self" (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 80). The widows felt a sense of loyalty to the farm and their husbands to not completely get rid of the farm. They wanted to honor their husbands by keeping the farm alive because that is what they perceived their husbands would have wanted.

Reminders of the Deceased. “For those who have lost a family member on the farm, the reminder of the loved one is constantly there during both work and leisure time” (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 80). This is especially the case when the death happens due to an accident on the farm. In some cases, the equipment that was the cause of the fatality was sold to decrease the likelihood of those bad memories showing up again. The same goes for livestock and other areas where the death might have occurred.

Increased Awareness of Farm Safety. When dealing with a fatal accident on the farm, the widow and family members reported a stronger concern for farm safety after the accident occurred.

Grief. “Widows reported feeling in a dazed or numb state after the death and remembered little about that time. Unfortunately, they were unable to take time away from the farm to deal with their feelings of grief” (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 81). When a family experiences the loss of a family member, there is a quick onset of numbness and disbelief. People process grief differently and in their own time; that time, however, is dictated by the farming operation for a farming widow.

Comforts and Support. Communities, friends, neighbors, church members, etc., usually show up in someone’s time of need during a death. Farming families are no different; “the widows received not only emotional support, but also help with the necessary farm work and advice on economics” (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 82). The help received on the farm helps keep the operation running during the initial mourning period but slowly dissipates over time, leaving the widow to deal with the decisions.

Coping. Widows in this study said that a strong support system really pulled them through the death of their husbands. They also identified several activities that they felt were helpful: “reading, keeping a journal, quilting, writing a book, exercising, traveling, learning to dance, watching television, and helping others” (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 82). These women also stressed the importance of keeping their minds occupied with something; some even said having the new farming responsibilities helped them adjust and cope because they kept them busy.

Each one of these areas was deemed very important for the widow to address at the onset of the death and shortly after the passing of their husbands. Researchers asked about any advice they might have for future widows who might have to go through what they experienced. Their responses were:

Four of the women felt that it was best to keep busy and mentioned spending time with others, learning a new activity, and traveling as helpful. Two strongly advised waiting at least six months to a year to make any major decisions or life changes. Other words of advice included taking one day at a time and sharing feelings with a trusted friend or family member. (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001, p. 83)

Losing a spouse is never easy, but the complications of having to maintain a farm for a new widow is a very challenging and emotional task.

Loss of spouse (death of wife). The crisis that is the loss of a wife has been less studied, and research shows an area of neglect. Feminist movements in research have spearheaded several studies for the female companion losing the male as covered in the previous section. No studies were identified that specifically focused on farm widowers, thus leaving research in the area of the farm widower wide open. This further validates the importance of this study to shed light on the response of the male farming widowers to the passing of their spouse.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

To gain understanding of how the loss of spouse impacts the farmer, the Double ABCX Model of Family Stress was used as a theoretical lens. The Double ABCX Model is a framework that examines the impact of a crisis in the dynamics of a family. This model was developed from studies of how families coped with major life crises including the loss of a family member serving in the military (McCubbin, Boss, Wilson, & Lester, 1980). Over the past 30 years, it has been used to study a variety of life events and is a useful tool to frame this research project. Basically, the model is describing the process of coping with a life crisis, the pile up of stressors, and how well an individual is able to adapt to his or her new situation.

The ABCX Model of Family Crisis

The Double ABCX Model is an extension of the initial ABCX family crisis model.

The earliest conceptual foundation for research to examine the variability in families was the Hill (1958) ABCX family crisis model: A (the stressor event)-interacting with B (the family's crisis meeting resources)-interacting with C (the definition the family makes of the event)- produce X (the crisis). (Hill, 1958, p. 141)

The value of this model is found in the breakdown of the letters (A, B, C, and X) that represent different components of the stress in a family's life. "A" is the stressor event. Hill (1958) used the word stressor to mean, "a situation for which the family has had little or no prior preparation and must therefore be viewed as problematic." (p. 141) Stress is sometimes found from things that we least expect, things that happen suddenly with little to no explanation. "B" is the family's crisis meeting resources. Hill described these as "factors in family organization that, by

their presence kept the family from crisis or, by their absence, urged a family into crisis” (p. 141). These resources will be different in every family; examples of these resources in a time of family stress would be religion, friendships, money, etc. “C” is the definition the family makes of the event. The subjective definition the family made of the event equaled the meaning or interpretation of the event and its accompanying hardships for the family. Gaining a good understanding of what has happened will gauge how well the family transitions will gauge how well they transition from stressor to normalcy. “X” is the crisis. Crisis in this context is anything that disrupts the daily lives of a family. Examples of this would be the loss of intimacy between a man and wife due to an illness or death.

However, McCubbin and Patterson (1983) found that Hill’s (1958) ABCX Model:

addressed only the degree of short term disruption a family experiences based upon the stressor event and that the level of family adaptation could be more adequately understood by following the family processes after the initial family response to stressor events. (p. 11)

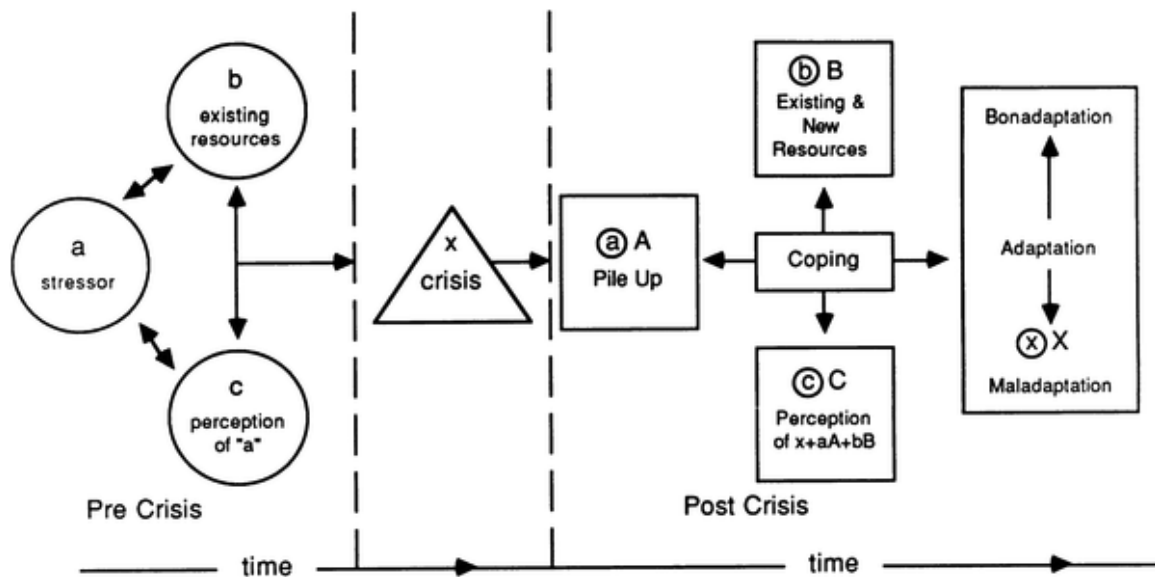
The Double ABCX Model of Family Stress was developed by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) to add a post-crisis phase to the original ABCX Model. Therefore, the Double ABCX Model of Family Stress brings forth a framework that looks at pre- and post-crisis family dynamics, early impact, and long-term impact on the family (Plunkett, Sanchez, Henry, & Robinson, 1997).

The Double ABCX Model of Family Stress

Manning, Wainwright, and Bennett (2011) described the Double ABCX Model of Family Stress as it, “adds post crisis variables in an effort to describe life stressors,

family resources, and the meaning of the event over time” (p. 321). The Double ABCX compared to the original ABCX is a more exhaustive look at the crisis over time and how the family made it through the ordeal.

Figure 3.1 The Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis



Source: McCubbin and Figley, 1983, p. 12

The Double ABCX Model uses the original letter elements of A, B, C, and X but expands on them by adding a second corresponding un-capitalized letter to the framework. The resulting elements for the Double ABCX Model are aA, bB, cC, and xX. The capitalized letters A, B, C, and X refer to factors preceding the event; changes in those elements over time and subsequent to the crisis are depicted as a, b, c, and x.

The “aA” factor represents the stressor and the pile-up of those stresses. Xu (2007) noted that families rarely deal with just one stressor at a time at any given moment. There have been several studies completed dealing with the Double ABCX

Model and the different types of stressors a family has to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Stressors can range from anything to a divorce in the family (Plunkett et al., 1997) a physical disability (Xu, 2007), a mental disability (Shin & Crittenden, 2003), or in this study's case, the death of a spouse (Ungar & Florian, 2004).

The "bB" factor is the family's resources available for informal support of the situation. McCubbin and Figley (1982) showed that there are three different resources affecting a family's adjustment to crises: personal resources, family system resources, and social support. There are four different areas of personal resources: financial, educational, health, and psychological resources, each making a personal difference in a stressful event in a family's life. Two of the family system resources elements are family cohesion and adaptability. How well a family can mesh together during a crisis shows their cohesiveness. How well they can adapt is put into perspective during a crisis situation. Social support depends on three different levels: emotional support, esteem support, and network support.

The "cC" factor is the family perception or meaning to the crisis situation. Lavee, McCubbin, and Patterson (1985) made a point that cC reflects a sense of acceptance and understanding of the situation, which definition of the situation is made and within which perceptions are judged. Pakenham, Sofronoff, and Samios (2004) found that meaning is an adaptive response that does not enlighten particular characteristics of the crisis coping process that makes this response to adversity more or less likely. Each crisis situation is going to affect the family that is experiencing it in a different manner; dynamics of the family and the stipulations of the crisis dictate the depth in which the family perceives each difficulty.

The “xX” factor is the family adaptation to the crisis over time. Family adaptation, according to Lavee et al. (1985), is the outcome of the family’s journey in response to the crisis and the buildup of extra demands. There are two different variables when analyzing family adaptation: maladaptation and bonadaptation. Lavee et al. (1985) defined Maladaptation as “the negative end of the continuum, is defined as continued imbalance between the pile-up of demands and the family’s capabilities for meeting those demands” (p. 813). Examples of these demands might be physical and mental health of having to deal with the crisis and stress of the added responsibilities. Lavee et al. (1985) also defined “Bonadaptation” as “the positive end of the continuum, is defined as a minimal discrepancy between the pile-up of demands and the family’s capabilities, so as to achieve a balance in family functioning” (p. 813). The strengthening of the family’s mental state and physical state during and after the initial crisis is an example of Bonadaptation.

The Double ABCX Model allows researchers to hone in on the positives of the crisis in a family and identify the strengths of how the family got through those hard days. Thus, this Double ABCX Model is an effective lens through which to examine the crisis of the male farmer’s loss of spouse.

Chapter 4: Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. Participants were recruited through an extensive advertising campaign involving all 120 counties Cooperative Extension Service Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Agents. The researcher traveled to the farms, homes, and designated meeting places requested by the volunteers. Interviews with these farm widowers were digitally tape recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Participants' Recruitment

Participant criteria was any full-time Kentucky male farmer that had lost a female spouse beyond a period of one year, was 50 years of age or older, and had been married to their late spouse for at least 25 years.

Participants in this study were identified through a recruitment flyer, (Appendix 1). The flyer had the details of the study, age and gender qualifications, and how to participate in the study.

The researcher sent out an initial contact email to all 120 ANR Extension Agents in the state of Kentucky (Appendix 2) explaining the study and how to advertise for the program. The flyer was sent to every county ANR Agent so that they could display the flyer at their Extension Offices. Potential participants who saw the notice then contacted the researcher directly indicating their desire to volunteer for the study. To keep the identity of the participants as private as possible, the flyer encouraged the subjects to only contact the researcher and not the place they noticed the flyer. Some ANR Agents contacted farmers that they thought might fit the criteria for this study and simply passed along the recruitment

flyer with the researcher's contact information. The men then could volunteer to take part in the study by contacting the researcher directly without the ANR Agent knowing whether the farmer chose to volunteer.

Interview Process

The researcher traveled to the farmer's home or another private location that was acceptable to the participant. At each location, the researcher explained the research process by going over the University of Kentucky IRB approved Informed Consent form for this study (Appendix 3). Before the interview took place, the participant signed the Informed Consent form. The researcher then explained that an electronic voice recorder would be used in order to capture the entire conversation of the interview.

Before the interview took place, the researcher presented the participant with an announcement of the closest grief counseling location to his location. It was explained to the farmers that if they feel any strong reoccurrence of emotion after the interview, they needed to contact the organization on the sheet for any type of counseling concerns. This was not a requirement for the participant to contact the counseling center but a precautionary measure by the researcher.

The interview then began and the participant was asked a series of questions that took them through their farming operations and home lives before, during, and after the loss of their spouse (Appendix 4).

After all of the questions were asked and answered, the researcher asked the participants if they had anything else to add to the study, and then the researcher notified the farmer that the interview was over and turned off the electronic

recording device. The researcher then thanked the participant for their time and told them that at the conclusion of the study they will be receiving any materials that were developed from the study.

The researcher kept a reflective journal from all interviews with participants, and the interviews were professionally transcribed. Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher listened and read the transcriptions for accuracy to verify them.

With such a short window to build rapport with the participants, the researcher used the initial meeting period to befriend the farmers enough for them to build trust in the interviewing process. The farmers were then eased into the interview process by making sure that they did want to participate.

Participant Descriptions

This section is written so that the reader can gain a better understanding of the men that participated in this study with some basic information on their situations and lives. The chart in Figure 4.1 gives a good sense of the type of operation, age, and family life of each one of the farmers in this study.

Figure 4.1 Participant Description Demographics

Farmer #	Age	Marital Status	# of Years Married	Type of Farm	# of Children	Wife's Role on Farm	# of Years Since Death
1	82	Widowed	42	Beef Cattle, Retired Tobacco	2	Co-Farmer & Homemaker	9
2	75	Widowed	32+	Hay and Retired Dairy	3	Worked Off Farm	2
3	74	Widowed	36	Hay, Retired Tobacco	3	Co-Farmer and Managed Business	20
4	76	Widowed	51+	Beef Cattle, Retired Tobacco	1	Worked Off Farm and Homemaker	5
5	80	Widowed	51	Hay, Retired Beef/ Tobacco	1	Paperwork and Homemaker	4
6	65	Re-Married	21	Beef Cattle	3	Worked Off Farm	21
7	73	Widowed	51	Livestock/ Vegetable	0	Missionary & Homemaker	2
8	83	Widowed	58	Beef and Retired Tobacco	1	Managed Business & Homemaker	3
9	52	Widowed	32	Beef, Grain, Forages	1	Co-Farmer and Worked Off Farm	2
10	80	Widowed	57	Beef	3	Homemaker	4

Farmer #1. The first participant was an 82-year-old beef cattle farmer. He had been a tobacco farmer until the buyout in the early 2000s, and he took the buyout money and retired from growing the crop. The marriage lasted 42 years, and at the time of the interview, his wife passed away 9 years ago. They had two children together, one daughter and one son. Farmer #1 had three grandchildren as well. However, before his wife passed away, tragedy struck their family and took the son and grandson at early stages of life and his attention shifted away from his son taking over the farm to his daughter. She cooked for him every night and took care of his clothes, house cleaning, etc. His tone and answers suggested that he was not sad anymore but was lonely, and it was just something he had to get through in his own way. He wore Dickies overalls, a tractor supply baseball cap, and Georgia boot company boots. The interview took place in the living room of the participant's home that was filled with cedar woodworking crafts that he still made in his shop. He credited this hobby for getting him through some tough days since the passing of his spouse. Additionally, Farmer #1 shared that he loved horses more than anything in the world. He even proudly showed pictures of himself plowing tobacco fields with one of his horses some 25 years ago. His life views were very much deeply entrenched in the older ways of living and farming; he noted several times, "that you do what you say, and your word is your bond."

Farmer #2. This participant was a 75-year-old retired dairy farmer who now only produces hay for sale. The interview took place at his local county Extension Service Office meeting room. He clearly dressed up for the occasion as evidenced by his stockyards baseball cap, khakis, nice blue button down shirt, and

well-polished black shoes. Farmer #2 had been married twice, for a total of 55 years marriage, 35 years to his second wife. He had two children with his first wife and one with his second. At the time of the interview, his wife passed away a little over two years ago. It was very evident to the researcher that Farmer #2 was very much still in the initial mourning period. The challenges handling his spouse's passing had led him to seek professional help, and he was currently using prescription medication as a form of coping. One of the things that he loved the most was his draft horses; he continues to pull them in local, state, and regional competitions. The love of the farm had somewhat diminished over the years of sweat and tears, but his passion was firmly still nesting in his draft horses. Upon the passing of his spouse, he really missed his wife's income since his income operated the farm and her income operated the home. He noted several times that he wanted to help with this study because his wife would have wanted him to do it and he thought that it was the right thing to do.

Farmer #3. This participant was a 74-year-old tobacco and crop farmer. His marriage lasted 36 years before his wife passed away. The interview took place at his local county Extension Service Office. He wore a western shirt with blue jeans and a local farming operation baseball cap. His wife had been deceased 20 years at the time of the interview; however, he talked about her as if she had just passed away. Farmer #3 was blessed with three children and several grandchildren. Throughout the interview, he kept saying how great of a woman he was married to for so many years and that they had an amazing life together. None of his children wanted to take over the family farm, but one of his son-in-laws has shown interest

in taking over when he can no longer continue farming. Besides the farming operation, he also ran a cabinet business that he and his wife founded together. He said that, “she would design them for a certain household, and I would build them the way she told him to build them.” His mother was very instrumental in helping him through the coping process after the passing of his spouse. One very interesting thing that happened during their marriage was that he became ill with hepatitis for over a year, and during that time, the wife operated the farm and cabinet business until he was able to resume his duties.

Farmer #4. This participant was a 76-year-old beef cattle farmer and retired tobacco farmer. His marriage lasted 51 years, 6 months, and 15 days. Significantly, he knew exactly how many years, months, and days they had been married and gave this very specific answer when asked how long they were married. His wife had been deceased about five years at the time of the interview. He wore khakis, a button-down shirt, slip-on boots and a local stockyards baseball cap. The interview took place at his local county Extension Service Office. He had one son, who was unmarried and did not have any grandchildren. He noted during the interview that once he and his son passed away that it would be, “the last of the Mohicans,” which was his way of saying that his family lineage would end with his son. Out of the 10 farmers interviewed for this study, Farmer #4 was the only farmer who lost his wife suddenly; she passed away at the dinner table due to a heart condition. Before the interview began, he told the researcher that he, “didn’t like to talk about it none but would try.” His wife was very ambitious as she taught school, took care of things within the home, and helped Farmer #4 raise tobacco, feed cattle, load hay, etc. He

missed his wife a lot. He missed her cooking, always having a clean home, a fresh vegetable garden, and her companionship. He was still sad and awkward with his emotions.

Farmer #5. This participant was an 80-year-old forage and hay farmer but was a retired tobacco and cattle farmer of 50 plus years. He wore khakis, a button-down khaki shirt, lace-up boots, and a Bryant hat. The interview took place in his garage carport next to a field of freshly cut hay that he was planning to roll bale that afternoon. His wife had passed away four and a half years prior to the time of the interview. They had been married 51 years. His wife was a stay-at-home farm wife, having only worked for a few years at a local factory at the beginning of their marriage. She took care of the farm paperwork, the cooking, cleaning, etc. They had one daughter who is now the primary caretaker for her father since the passing of her mother. During the tobacco buyout in the early 2000s, Farmer #5 retired from tobacco production and focused primarily on hay production. He also started working at his local grocery store daily as a means of financial support after the loss of the tobacco income. After the passing of his spouse, he continued to work at the store and credited it with helping him cope with the loss of his spouse. His health had been a roller coaster ride through the years, having several heart bypass surgeries, cancer, and cancer treatments. However, he still farms and works in the grocery store persevering through health issues and the loss of his spouse.

Farmer #6. This participant was a 65-year-old beef cattle farmer. He wore khaki shorts, tennis shoes, and a t-shirt to the interview in the driveway of his cattle feed barn. His wife had been deceased for 21 years at the time of the interview,

having died of ovarian cancer when she was only 40 years old. They had three sons that were still at home when she passed away. Farmer #6's wife was a school teacher, and he was a full-time farmer. His situation was a lot different than anyone else interviewed because he immediately had to start taking care of 3 school-age boys by himself. He noted that, "I had three little boys sitting there looking at me. And I had to do whatever it took to provide for them and make sure I was there when they needed me." One thing that he stated a couple of times during the interview about his boys was that, "I'm real proud that all three of them have a Master's degree." He maintained his farming operation throughout everything and now he and one of his sons run the farm together. After being single for 11 years and raising all 3 of his boys, Farmer #6 remarried and is still currently married.

Farmer #7. This participant was a 73-year-old livestock and vegetable farmer, and the interview took place on the porch of his home. He wore khaki shorts, flip-flops, and a polo shirt. His wife had been deceased two years at the time of the interview. They had been married for 51 years and did not have any children together. His wife was full-time missionary to several local religious organizations. She did not help on the farm; however, she did take care of everything in and around the home for the couple. He noted that, "she took care of me." They had many trying years because she suffered from rheumatoid arthritis in her hands for her last 20 or so years. The disease was very debilitating, and he had to help her at times with her work. Through the years, he dabbled in a little bit of everything but always maintained the farm. His most successful project came in the form of green peppers; he used to grow acres of the crop, and he supplied a distributor in

Tennessee with purchase orders for several years of peppers. He noted that the hardest thing he had to do after the passing of his spouse was, “getting rid of her clothes and things.”

Farmer #8. This participant was an 83-year-old beef cattle farmer and retired tobacco farmer. He wore khakis, a button-down shirt, lace-up boots, and a local stockyards baseball cap. The interview took place in his home at the kitchen table. He was married to his late spouse for 58 years before she passed. They had one son together who now runs the farming operation with his father. He also has four grandchildren who he says check on him regularly. His wife was a stay-at-home wife until they purchased a boot store in town. She ran the boot store, and he took care of the farm. At the time of the interview, she passed away 3 years prior. During the interview, Farmer #8 kept talking about how great his marriage and wife were over the years, “if we ever went to bed mad at each other in 58 years, I don’t know it.” Over the years, Farmer #8 has farmed thousands of acres, but since he is getting up in age, he and his son have downsized to around 500 acres. Since the passing of his spouse, his son’s wife cooks, cleans, and does the laundry. During the interview, he said that his daughter-in-law will not let him wear clothes that haven’t been ironed, “Presses all my dog gone clothes. My wife didn’t do that. She didn’t iron.” The way he said it appears as if he was frustrated with her, but it was his way of acknowledging her loving acceptance in helping him during his time of loss. Farmer #8 knew that he had to deal with the loss himself or he would never get over it, “let me work this out myself.” At the conclusion of the interview, he said that he had to go get his grandson from school and go check the cattle, “no time to waste.”

Farmer #9. This participant was a 52-year-old beef cattle, grain, and forage production farmer. The interview took place in the living room of his home. He wore a blue polo shirt, blue jeans, and lace-up boots. He and his wife were married for 32 years before she passed away. They had one daughter together and one grandson. Farmer #9 stated that they had a very good relationship, “we were high school sweethearts, and we got married at the 24th day of May at 3:45 p.m.; we were best buddies.” His wife worked for local government offices right up until about a year before she passed away. At the time of the interview, she passed away two years ago. He ran the farm and an excavation business throughout their marriage. His late wife took care of all of the paperwork, and after she passed away, it became a problem because he owned two businesses, “the paperwork was the most challenging, yes.” Farmer #9 also talked a lot about his wife wanting to really enterprise and make the farm bigger, wanting more cattle, land, etc. Upon the passing of his spouse, he noted that he kind of got in a rut where he didn’t want to do anything; the enterprising was gone essentially. Yet he carried on attending church and gained support from people who had experienced loss and got through the initial mourning period. “You know, I could lay here and feel sorry for myself because she’s gone, or I could get up and do something about it, and that’s kind of what I had to do and I got the advice.”

Farmer #10. This participant was an 80-year-old beef cattle producer and feeder calf backgrounder. The interview took place at his local county Extension Service Office. At the time of the interview, his wife had been passed for a little over 4 years. They were married for 57 years. They had three children together, two

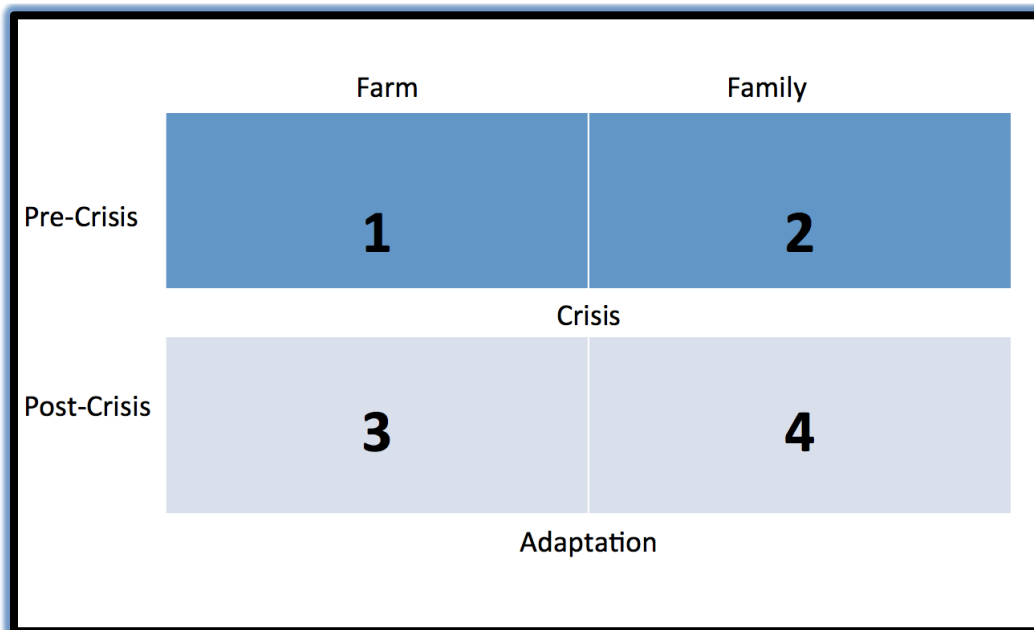
sons and one daughter, and they were blessed with two grandchildren. He returned from the Army in 1952 and started working for his wife's father on the farm. She was an only child and upon the passing of her parents, they inherited her family's farms. Farmer #10's wife was a stay-at-home mother and worked in the house. Through solid management on his part, they were able to multiply their farms over the years and toward the later years of their lives sell those farms off for substantial profits. One of their sons has taken over the physical day-to-day work on the farm, but Farmer #10 is still the decision maker and works everyday on the land. After being married 57 years and living on the farm their whole lives, Farmer #10 talked about his loss, "when she died, why I mean it was just a hole there and the hole has never gone completely away." Farming was a way of living for Farmer #10 and his wife of over 50 years, but he also understands now the hardships they withstood to stand where they are now, "the farm never really did make a whole lot of money, in any, spent more money because just expenses are so daggone high."

Chapter 5: Data Analyses

This study investigated the impact of the loss of spouse experienced by male farmers had on both their farming operation as well as their family life. The Double ABCX theoretical framework was used to organize the data collected from interviews with 10 such widowers.

Recall that the Double ABCX Model examines coping as a result of a crisis, in this case loss of spouse, by clarifying stressors, resources, and perceptions in the pre-crisis and post-crisis periods. For the purpose of this study, interviewees' comments were organized by impacts to the farming operation and family life as described in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Farming and Family Life Pre and Post-Crisis Adaptations



Yet, as will become apparent from the life stories of these men, making a clear distinction between farm and family is quite difficult. Farming is a family business and hence the household is engaged in daily operations of the enterprise. Families organize their work lives and family roles differently depending on the type of operation, seasonality of the type of farming, family members' roles in the operation, desire and/or need of the adult members to be employed off farm labor and/or own additional businesses, division of household personal preferences, and the health and well-being of the family. Farming is a 24/7 way of life where the boundaries between work and family are often blurred. The cattle are checked late at night, discussions of the daily farm agenda occur at the kitchen table, and family members may be called upon at a moment's notice to assist with an urgent need. Since this study focused on loss of spouse, the researcher chose to separate the farm production and family life to highlight any potential gendered divisions of labor.

Criteria of Organizing Data

Farm operation pre-crisis (Quadrant 1). Data compiled in this section included anything that happened on the farm before the passing of the spouse. Hence, the following section covers how the interview data was categorized into the four quadrants of Figure 5.1. Farmers described the operation itself, who ran the farm, the wife's and other family members' role on the farm, and how the operation had changed over the years. The farmers' responses to the following questions from the interview protocol were incorporated into this section.

- Let's start talking about your farming operation. How many years have you been a farmer?
- Tell me about your operation. How has it changed over the years?

- What was your farming operation like at the beginning of your marriage compared to the operation now?
- Do any of your children show interest in taking on the family farm in the future? Or have they already started farming the farm?
- How did your wife help you on the farm? Or did she?
- Had you ever talked about what you would do with the farm if either of you passed away? Wills? Business Planning? Farm Succession?

Family life pre-crisis (Quadrant 2). Data included in this section addressed family life before the passing of the spouse. Farmers commented on their marriage, the home life in general, their children, and grandchildren, whether there were traditional gender roles in the relationship, who handled paperwork, and family health issues. Responses to the following were incorporated into this section.

- How many years were you married?
- How many children do you have? If any? Dependents or adults?
- Briefly describe your marriage.
- Did your wife have a job? How important was that income?
- Who took care of the financial paperwork in the relationship?
- Were there traditional roles in the marriage? i.e., The wife cooked, cleaned the house, and took care of the children.
- What were some of the challenging things that you and your spouse had to overcome throughout your marriage?

Crisis loss of spouse. Data compiled in this section focused on anything that happened during the actual passing of the spouse and during the initial mourning period. Thus, comments that described the circumstances of the death, who took care of the farm during the funeral period, who provided the most support during the funeral period, and the initial grieving process for the farmer. Responses to the following questions asked of the farmer were incorporated into this section.

- How many years has it been since the passing of your spouse?
- Upon the death of your spouse, was it sudden or was there speculation of death through sickness leading up to the death?

- Who took care of the farming operation during the funeral period? You? Family Member? Neighbor?
- How was the initial grieving process for you upon the immediate death of your spouse?
- How long did it take before you felt like you were getting out of the initial mourning period?
- Who helped get you through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?

Farm operation post crisis (Quadrant 3). Data in this section included farmers' comments regarding what had happened on the farm since the passing of their spouse. Farmers discussed transitions in their operation, financial challenges after their wife's death, and how family and neighbors pitched in to keep the operation running. Responses to the following interview questions were incorporated into this section.

- What changes did you have to make in your daily farming operation upon the passing of your spouse?
- Were these changes something you did not expect or were you expecting them?
- How was your operation impacted during the first year after the loss of your spouse?
- Did you take a financial hit after the passing of your spouse?
- If so, who did you turn to for financial advice?
- What was the role of the farming community as you were coping with the passing of your wife?
- If you could pinpoint one thing that is the most different about your farming operation after the loss of your spouse what would it be?
- If resources were available to help you as a farmer with your spousal loss would you have liked to have received some? If yes, what would have been helpful? i.e., Factsheet, letter, publication. Who should it come from? .e., Extension Agents, family members, church pastors?

Family life post crisis (Quadrant 4). Data in this section focused on widowers' descriptions of what happened in their family life since the passing of their spouse. Their answers described how the void was filled, what tasks were the most

challenging for the widower, who provided them with the most support, and what helped and hindered them getting through the loss. Information from the following interview questions was included into this section.

- Did you know what changes were in store for you at the time of the passing of your spouse?
- What were some changes that happened within your family/home upon the passing of your spouse?
- What are some things that you had to take over and start doing that your spouse always did? i.e., things in the house, garden, mowing the yard, etc.
- Were these new tasks challenging for you? If so, what was the most challenging?
- Have you remarried? If so, how many years after the passing of your spouse did you remarry?
- If you could pinpoint one thing that is the most different about your family life after the loss of your spouse what would it be?

Adaptation. In this final section, participants described what they had done to adapt to their current situation.

- Who provided you with the most support during the loss of your spouse? Were there any specific individuals or groups?
- What would have helped you in the initial mourning period to get through the loss of your spouse? If anything?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share about the loss of your spouse?
- Any advice for other farmers? My grandfather recently lost his spouse what advice would you give him?
- What if anything helped get you through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?
- What did not help you get through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?

Data Description Section

Farmer #1.

Farm operation pre-crisis. This 82-year-old farmer ran a tobacco, corn, cattle, dairy, sheep and horse farm. Tobacco was the main source of income for

Farmer #1 and cattle a close second in the years leading up to his wife's passing. The wife was a farm wife taking care of the home primarily but also contributed to the farming operation when needed. During the interview, he spoke of how she always helped him set tobacco, strip tobacco, milk the cows, work in the vegetable garden etc., but when it came time for dinner or supper, she would drop everything. He said that she would say, "Look I have to go up to the house and fix us a bite of dinner or supper." The children as well as the grandchildren helped out as much as they could on the farm as well as the grandchildren.

Farmer #1 was a hard worker and the primary breadwinner for his family. When he and his wife were first married, he worked for a local farmer helping him do odds and ends jobs, since neither he nor she had actual jobs at the time. So the old neighbor farmer asked him one day, "Now what are you gonna do?" Farmer #1 replied, "Well if I don't farm, I've gotta go to Cincinnati, Dayton, Marion or somewhere like that." The neighbor farmer then told him that, "If you're gonna farm, I want you to go in my house and run my farm." So that is what he and his wife decided to do and after 26 years running that farm the owner passed away and they bought the farm he currently lives on now. They had a will made and everything ready in case one of them passed away so that the family knew what to do with the farm. He said that, "it was fixed on to where if I left her here she was boss and if she left me here, I was boss. I mean we had it fixed for the children."

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #1 and his wife had two children together, a son and a daughter, during their 52 years of marriage. The wife took care of the kids and the home while Farmer #1 was away working on the farm. When asked if she

ever had an outside job anywhere, he replied, “No, no, no, never worked at nothing since me and her was married ... farm, farm. She was a farmer’s wife, that’s what you can say; she was a farmer’s wife.” The wife did all of the traditional home chores, the cooking, house cleaning, laundry, and even the yard work. The one thing she didn’t do was the paperwork. Farmer #1 always took care of the paperwork and paying of the bills.

His wife, however, was somewhat sick throughout the marriage due to a severe battle with diabetes. When asked what problems he and his wife might have encountered throughout their marriage, Farmer #1 singled out her sickness as being the hardest thing they ever tried to get through in their marriage.

Well I took care of her 11 years before I lost her. See she was a diabetic, lost her leg, couldn’t keep fluid from getting on her lungs and they put a stimulator or pacemaker whatever you wanna call it in that heart. You know, a diabetic just kept-you don’t know- what I know about a diabetic you don’t know what it is working on. You know you’ve got it, but you don’t know what part of the organs or your body it is working on. Being sick though didn’t slow her down, “when she first lost that leg she cooked her meal here. We’d come in at dinnertime, she’d have a meal fixed for us.”

Another challenging thing the couple had to endure while married was the loss of their grandson suddenly to a gun accident. Farmer #1 said that it took him a while to handle it but that his wife didn’t handle it well at all. “That was hard for me to handle, buddy. The doctor told us, ‘Well there’s life left for you and you can handle it.’” So Farmer #1 answered the doctor, “‘I’ve got to handle it.’ I handled it better than she did (his wife), but it was rough.” Health was also a challenge for Farmer #1; he needed both hips replaced while his wife was still around but wouldn’t have the surgeries because he wanted to take care of his wife. She kept

telling Farmer #1, “Fix them, fix them.” But he would tell her, “No, I can’t do it. I got to see to you; I gotta take care of you.” He put off his own struggles to take care of his wife until her passing.

Crisis-loss of spouse. After 52 years of marriage, Farmer #1 lost his wife. At the time of this research interview, she had been deceased for nine years. His wife passed away from having too much fluid in her lungs, a complication resulting from her long bout with diabetes. When asked about how she passed away, Farmer #1 responded with, “it filled her up ... it just kept, they couldn’t do nothing.” The doctors and other family members asked him if he was going to watch her struggle with the fluid on her lungs and watch her pass away? He replied “Yes, she’s my wife; she may need something and I just sat there and watched them get that off of her lungs like that there.”

Farmer #1 was asked who took care of the farm during the funeral and initial grieving period, and he replied that he took care of everything, “You know’d what you had to do. You couldn’t throw your hands up.” When asked about the initial grieving process, he replied,

Well I missed her and everything like that, it just don’t, you just don’t, as time goes by it gets better, but you don’t never get over nothing like that now. It just, as time goes by things will get better, but you just don’t, you’ll see things that, you know, just like my wife or my son or my grandson. There will be things that come back to you. Just like it. You know, it never gets over or it don’t with me. I mean and I think other people would say the same.

Farm operation post crisis. After the passing of his spouse, Farmer #1 maintained his farming operation with his daughter and son chipping in more to

help him out when he needed it. Both lived in close proximity to the farm, and his daughter took over the role of providing supper for him.

I'll grab a sandwich or anything for dinner. But my daughter cooks a good supper every night because her husband works at the factory, dayshift, and she says he just has to grab anything, you know, and she fixes a good supper.

When talking about his farming operation post the passing of his spouse, Farmer #1 replied, "everything just like it was." Farmer #1 did not take a financial hit after the passing of his spouse nor did he have to turn to anyone for financial advice because he always took care of that side of the farming operation.

Since there is no longer anyone in the home with Farmer #1 to look after his well-being in case of an accident, he noted that letting his daughter now know where he will be on the farm is a top priority for the family.

You know, age and what all I've got wrong with me, well she knows where I'm at 99% of the time. Just like I get done feeding here in the morning I'll just go around and just, a few minutes, so she'll know and I've got feeding done and alright. If I didn't show up, well she'd be here.

Upon the immediate passing of his spouse, Farmer #1 talked about how the farming community really did not help him through the crisis of his spouse passing because he really did not need them due to his strong family support and his local church that really helped him through her passing. Farmer #1 was asked to pinpoint one thing about his farming operation that was the most different after the passing of his spouse? His response may appear to be somewhat insignificant but upon further review shows the bond and reliance within a farming couple's marriage. He said that, "When you'd be sorting out the cattle and sheep, we'd be up there, 'What I want you to do is open my gate when I say open it and what I want

you to do is shut it when I say shut it.' That's the way that was worked." He missed his gatekeeper, the person that opened the gates for him for years as he was sorting livestock. He now had to rely on other family members or neighbors to accomplish a task that was something he and his spouse always accomplished together on the farm.

Family life post crisis. Once his wife had passed away, Farmer #1 wanted his daughter to understand something. She had been assuming the role of primary caregiver for both parents during her mother's sickness. He said, "I told her, 'You've got your home.'" He wanted her to understand that she had her own life to live and she didn't have to stop everything and care for him. "She cleans and stuff like that, but ... I didn't want her to have responsibility to come in here. I wanted her to live her life with her home and stuff."

After the passing of his spouse, Farmer #1 knew changes were in store for him. He talked about this extensively when asked what he had to start doing that his wife had always done in the home, "I do my laundry which, you know, she done that. But now I do my own laundry." This task was challenging for him at first but said that it was no big deal now that he has learned how to do it. "I mean an automatic washer, there ain't nothing to it. Push the buttons it does it. They'll holler that you can't do this, can't do that. You can do it if you want to." He went into detail about the process. "You washed your underclothes, your white clothes. You didn't wash old work clothes and stuff in-you know to sort your clothes."

Farmer #1 was asked how long it took him before he felt like he was getting back to normal with family life after the passing of his spouse. He had previously

stated that one never gets over it, but in this instance he gave a different response, “Well I’d say something like a year or something like that, you know? It just, you know, it just....” Even after 11 years of sickness and seeing his wife’s declining health, it still took him a year to at least feel somewhat normal in his home life.

Adaptation. It has been nine years since the passing of his wife, and he shared that his doctors have told him something that he believes might have contributed to his good health. He said his doctor told him, “I believe the reason you lasted so well was because of what you’ve done for your wife.” He simply replied to them, “Well, somebody had to help her. That was the way it was supposed to be.” Acknowledging that he did take good care of his wife before her passing was something that you could tell he took great pride in. Farmer #1 has not remarried and found humor in his singleness when asked if he had remarried? “No, no, no, they, some of them would have liked to get in here, but ... (laughter).” He was then asked if he could pinpoint one thing in his family that was the most different after the passing of his spouse. His response was subtle, “I miss them there two granddaughters. They would come in here and they’d watch TV after my wife passed away. They’d come in here and watch that TV and you’d hear them.” He was referring to the time period after the passing of his wife that his granddaughters were always around playing and watching television. He missed his wife of course, but he also missed how things were when his family was younger, when he was younger. Farmer #1 has been through some hard times in his life, but his philosophy is “you have to live with it and live on”.

Farmer #2

Farm operation pre-crisis. This 74-year-old farmer started working on his family's farm when he was 10 years old, grew up on that farm, and still lives in the same house where he was raised. They milked dairy cows and grew tobacco since the 1950s. When he first started farming, the dairy cows were milked by hand and his father had a contract to sell with Carnation canned milk at the time. Farmer #2 recalled the early years of his farming career,

I milked for my dad and we sold to Carnation in the cans and before I went to school in the morning I'd wheelbarrow it to the road, an old wheelbarrow and push one can to the road; \$3.10 a hundred weight for Carnation milk.

His wife was a nurse but helped out on the farm when she had time. "She drove a tractor for us, hauling in square bale hay and she helped around the dairy haul lots, helped clean it up and we always raised a big garden." Even though they had separate jobs and two different incomes, Farmer #2 said that he took care of all of the financial paperwork for the farm and family. However, his wife made sure her finances were in order before her death, "She had a will made out. Of course I didn't ... well it had her money in it at that time but she just turned it over to me. If I went first, well I would have turned it over to her." Even though he kept up with the finances he noted that she still had her money that she worked hard as a nurse. Having that second income was a big help in maintaining a nice home, "It was really, real important." He noted that most of the time it took everything that he made on the farm to pay workhands and fund equipment purchases that it was his wife's income, which kept the home life operating.

I was out so much and had three workhands working for me the whole time and that dairy, tried to keep it going. By the time you bought your feed and your veterinary bills and buying cows every year and farm machinery, I mean all of mine went for payments on the stuff and she always kept the groceries on the table and kept me in clothes.

Farmer #2 also built barns on the side as a source of income for his operation during the down times of the seasons. He stated in the interview that, "I've slowed and in times a ways off I built barns. I built 8 or 10 barns in our county, but, when I got caught up during the seasons, you know."

One of the things that stood out about Farmer #2 during the interview is that he was adamant that farming for a living was a path that no one can take today and make a living. When he was asked if any of his children showed interest in taking over the family farm, he was very direct with his answer, "None of them. Well they can't make it. I've got a son who works here in town, 55 years old, but ain't no way he can make it. I mean..." The years of farming struggles shows in his responses and his surreal view of making a living in agriculture in today's time.

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #2 had three children and five grandchildren at the time of the interview. His wife worked 33 years as a nurse, and he claimed that they never had any trouble in the marriage, "No I mean we worked together." He and his wife can be described as having traditional division of labor when it came to household chores. His wife always took care of the home. He talked about how she cleaned the house on the weekends and took care of her flowerbeds and garden. One of the challenging things they did have to overcome in their marriage was his payment on the farm:

I mean you know we just took it as it come. I had my ups and downs on the money situation, I mean making payments here and there, but I always made them and I never did ask for none of her money. She kept the house up and food and stuff.

He also noted that one of their challenging times came in the form of her sickness, before her passing she was sick for nine years with cancer. Over the course of those years, his wife had nine surgeries to combat the cancer and he said that it was very difficult for them both, she had to quit her job and he was not on the farm as much because of his priority in taking care of her.

One family activity they always enjoyed and that sickness never touched was their annual trips to draft horse pulls. Farmer #2 has several Belgian horses he pulls in competitions all over the nation, and they would load up horse trailers and campers for draft horse pulls as a family.

Crisis loss of spouse. It had been almost two years since the passing of this farmer's spouse after a nine-year battle with cancer. During the funeral period and period leading up to her passing, he had several people help him out on the farm:

I've got a couple of boys that help me and they ... in the wintertime they'd feed my cows. I had to be at the hospital. Two or three days at a time, but I had them two boys working for me and I had a son who works public work up here, but he came out to check on, make sure things are all right and the tractors and stuff was running all right.

The initial grieving period was different for Farmer #2 than some because of his wife's extensive battle with her disease for so many years; he knew that it was coming one day. The pain of the loss was still hard to get over, "I done very well until they put her in the ground and it hit me then and then, I've never been a saint, but I mean it hits." The struggle of losing his wife was still evident on his face and

responses during the interview. He indicated that he couldn't even hear her name without breaking down.

Yeah well I can talk about it a little bit now. I mean well as of here lately, but I couldn't even mention her name forever and ever. It's a long way from being well, but you know at least I can talk about her now a little bit.

As a result of her loss Farmer #2 has been seeing a psychiatrist to combat his struggles with losing his spouse and for depression. They are trying the medication route as well and he noted that the pills seem to be working now, although at first they didn't help.

Farm operation post crisis. Since the passing of his spouse, Farmer #2 has made several changes to his farming operation precipitated by a combination of factors, the loss of his wife, old age and surgery on his arm that has limited what he can do on the farm.

Yeah I made a lot of changes this past year, but it was on account of my arm and I'm older, too. I'll be 75 in May. If I make it to May I'll be 75 years old and I had to give up my hay rolling. I'd done a lot of custom hay rolling in the square baler. I square bale if anybody wanted it and I just couldn't do it with one arm and I had to give my tobacco crop up.

He said that he hadn't planned on making any changes to his operation when his wife passed away but his arm forced him to make tough choices, "I wasn't going to make any, I was going to keep going as long as I could until I got my arm hurt and then I had to..."

One of the things that really hit Farmer #2 hard when he downsized his farm was the need to make tough financial decisions.

I had tightened up, dropped some insurances on vehicles and I didn't drop it all, but I dropped the full coverage and on my barns...two barns and the house and the welding shop and I cut way back on them because insurance

just ate me up. You know? And I'm not a working much and making a whole lot of money.

One thing that he talked about as being a significant change in his operation was his ability to keep up with the workload. His farm was growing up and not being maintained like he preferred and this concern was weighing on him. When talking about his farm getting harder to maintain Farmer #2 said that, "It's going down more because I can't keep it up. I mean barns need painting again. I can't afford it and ain't able neither. In fact one of them has never been painted yet, my new one."

However, one of the bright spots on his farm is his Belgian Draft Horses. He still plans on pulling them in the local, regional, state and national competitions. As he reflected on his farming career, he noted he enjoyed working with his draft horses the most over the years. Another companion that contributed to his ability to cope through the initial mourning stage was his Australian Shepherd dog. As he spoke about his dog, it was apparent that they had formed a very close bond since the passing of his wife. He said that, "But now just me, me and my dog. He won't leave the farm with me, but he's my buddy. He lies right by my side all around. He helps me with the cows." The tone he used when referring to his dog was one of endearment and warmth; they were getting through this ordeal together.

Family life post crisis. Farmer #2's family life has been very different since the passing of his spouse, having to take over chores that his wife had always done. When asked what changes within the home he now faces since the passing of his spouse:

Well I do it all now; putting all the washings out, and of course I've got a dishwasher in order to keep my kitchen dishes up. I do my own cooking, make my own bed and then run the sweeper once a week. I mean I just have to do it all now.

Some of these tasks were particularly challenging for him as they required a new skill and were a reminder of his wife's care for him, "Well the worst thing to hit me is the folding of my clothes, my shirts especially, but I mean I have done it." He talked about one great thing that he can do is cook, "Yeah I do my own cooking. I don't have to worry about eating." He said that he learned to cook when he was younger; he used to sell pies at church to make a little extra money.

Having strong support from his children and church has really been the greatest help in the home since the passing of his wife.

Both of my daughters, well and my son both. They call me every morning yet and well my son doesn't, but he calls every night and they'll call every night. They don't even want to...them two girls call in the morning and I'll have to say the church helped a whole lot. I live...the church is built on the front of the farm.

Family, friends, church members, and other neighbors have called or visited Farmer #2 almost religiously since the passing of his spouse and to the point that it might have gotten on his nerves at first. When asked what people might have done that could have hindered his recovery from his spousal loss, he responded:

Sometimes it seemed like it bothered me people coming in you know or calling, calling talking to me and I might not felt like wanting to talk, which I didn't very much then. But...all of them was doing it for the good, to help.

When the passing was still fresh, the calls and visits were sometimes aggravating for Farmer #2 but now that he can reflect on the matter he realizes they were doing it for his own good. Eating out at Cracker Barrel restaurant once a month since the

passing of his spouse with his children and grandchildren is one of the highlights of his days. He talked about, "sitting down, relaxing, enjoying some iced tea, you know after a meal with my family." The pain of the loss in the home is still evident in this farmers life even after almost two years since his wife's passing, "I'd say it's just as bad or worse now than it was the first week." "Loneliness, by yourself" is really the biggest difference in Farmer #2's home life since the loss of his spouse.

Adaptation. When adapting to life without his spouse, Farmer #2 is still struggling to cope with his pain, "I mean it's just for me it's just a lonesome life and they say it'll get better. As of yet, it hasn't got no better I mean." He was asked if he had any advice for future male farmers who lose a spouse. He replied, "Just keep them as long as you can and love them and be good to them because then you've got it all to think about after they're gone and then you miss them." After the interview during the wrap-up thoughts by the interviewer, it was noted that Farmer #2 left the interview believing 100% that nothing anyone can do anywhere to help him. The loneliness and sadness he feels since the passing of his spouse is what consumes him and his thoughts.

Farmer #3

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farmer #3 was a thrifty agriculturalist who raised cattle, tobacco, corn, hay, and vegetable gardens while also maintaining a cabinet-making business and truck-driving operation. He talked about how different his operation was now compared to when he got married. In the beginning, he said that, "Back in my first days of farming you mainly raised it for your own use and you depended on yourself. Of course you raised your own feed for your mules

and cows and I always kept cows. I kept the cows for the family use, milk.” At the time of the interview he had been farming for over 55 years; during 36 of those years, he was married to his late wife. His spouse was always helping out on the farm, doing whatever needed to be done on a daily basis.

When talking about his wife’s assistance on the farm he told a story of how she saved their cows while he was away on a job,

She drove a tractor, truck or car or anything that needed to be done. She was there. One time I was away on the job, had six good cows and we switched them over behind the house and I come in and they’re standing over there with their heads dropped down. I said, “What’s wrong with the cows?” She said, “They got pneumonia in that barn over there and I just had the vet with them.” They done been dead if it hadn’t been for her.

She was always there to do whatever needed to be done; she was his right hand when he needed her to be on the farm. One of the hardest things they had to get through together on the farm was his bout with hepatitis. When referring to this time in their life he said that, “Well I had a sick spell when I was a young man in the 70’s. I had hepatitis. Put me down for about a year. That was a long, hard challenging thing.” It was during this time that his wife had to assume the primary managerial position on the farm and in the home. He said she never missed a beat while he was sick, “She stripped tobacco and went right on with it. Mom and Dad was living then and Dad helped her but she was capable of doing anything I done.” His wife supported him on the farm and helped him and that was important to him.

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #3 was married for 36 years to his spouse and they had three children together. When speaking of his marriage and how early he got started he laughed and said, “Got married a month before I graduated (high

school). Man, I got an early start.” When asked if he could describe his marriage, he got teary eyed, choked up a little and finally got this statement out about his marriage, “Well my marriage has been as near perfect as it could’ve ever been. Yeah. Got involved with a good family.” His wife worked off farm for a few years when they were first married and he said that her income helped them when they were first starting out. She also took care of the financial paperwork in the relationship, “She managed the finances mainly and she was a good manager, even better than me.” Over the course of the interview you learned that his spouse took care of everything in the home, childcare, etc. It wasn’t until she became sick that she started doing less in the home; she was sick with cancer for a decade.

Crisis loss of spouse. His wife finally succumbed to her battle with cancer after 10 years of fighting it in their 36th year of marriage. She experienced a seizure brought on by the cancer. During the funeral period, Farmer #3 kept on doing what he always had done on the farm, “I kept right on doing it. I was working on the job. Took a little time off and went right on with it.” He also noted that he was able to keep on because it was during the winter months, “I had men come in to help in various times and when she passed away it was not too busy a time of the year, February you see, there wasn’t much farming going on.”

When asked about his initial grieving process, Farmer #3 said that he “still is” in the initial grieving process even after years of losing his wife. He also noted that having children still in the home at the time of her passing was a big help to his recovery of her loss, “Well I, you know, I had to, I had children. Our kids were still home and I had to go on for them.” After making that statement he stopped and

thought for a moment and then finished up his answer with, “As well as myself.” Meaning he had to pick up and go on for his children and for himself.

Farm operation post crisis. After the death of his spouse, Farmer #3 did not change his operation; he just kept on doing what he had been doing all along. Even before the passing of his spouse, he always tried to stay busy at something, “I always tried to keep a job, about three jobs that I could head out if I needed to, farmed, worked on the job and I always kept my big truck and I hauled coal.” If one job was kind of slow he always had others that he could fall back on for financial support and after the passing of his spouse he could keep his mind occupied. “Well I was always a—always been a busy fellow. I’ve always had plenty to do and always tried to keep busy if I got depressed.”

Family life post crisis. A key factor that helped Farmer #3 in his family life after the passing of his spouse was his supportive mother, whom was still living at the time and moved into the home to help him. However, since he and his spouse had shared household chores that he really could do anything that needed to be done after his wife passed away. He noted that, “I always helped cook. I’d peel potatoes and she’d put stuff in the oven or I’d put stuff in the oven and she’d peel potatoes and everything she done in the house I knew, I knew.” He said that his wife took comfort in her sick years knowing that they had done things together and that he would be okay once she passed away. “Well it just came natural to us. I knew I was gonna have to do it one day and she felt better or something I’d fix supper or whatever now.”

Support came from lots of different areas for Farmer #3 after his spouse passed away but none stronger than the support he received from his church, and he gave the credit for that to his wife, “Always been active in the church. Give her credit for that.” Early on in their marriage, he did not attend church as much as he could have but she got him to going regularly and then wouldn’t let him miss Sunday and Wednesday night services. It was for that very reason that Farmer #3 said that if there were some type of fact sheet or support materials that would have helped him through her passing that he would have liked to have received those from his church.

Adaptation. When asked what kind of advice Farmer #3 would give to another farmer going through the same crisis, he replied, “Well you know, two people working together and sharing a life together, that’s what it’s all about.” No advice just a statement on the way life is, his marriage completed his life. He also shared that, “There’s nothing no greater than a good wife. A good Christian wife that will take your family in the right direction.” Just when the interview was about to end he shared something that could be considered his advice for younger couples when referring to marriage, “So have a good start, you’ll have a better ending.”

Farmer #4

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farming came naturally to Farmer #4, “That’s all I have ever done.” His operation consisted of tobacco, cattle, and corn over the years. His family raised him to farm, and he started farming for a living when he became of age. His wife of over 50 years was a big help to him on the farm. He said that she, “could plow tobacco with a mule, run a mowing machine with mules; do anything

she could.” On the flip side, he and his wife had one son together, an only child, and he is not fond of farm work, working only when needed. He noted that his wife would get out when it was nasty and help on the farm, “Whatever day, sometimes the cows don’t get in this cold and I won’t get out. She’s a worker, buddy.”

Farmer #4’s operation has changed over the years, but primarily he gave up growing corn for his farm years ago. He stated that he could just buy feed cheaper than he could produce his own. He and his wife never talked about a will or what would happen to the farm after they were gone. They never liked to talk about death, “We never thought about death or nothing like that. Never did talk about it. So we never did.”

Family life pre-crisis. When asked how long he and his wife had been married, Farmer #4 knew exactly how many years, months, and right down to the days, “Fifty one years, six months and fifteen days.” You could tell in his voice when he phrased it that way he was proud of every one of those years, months, and days. His wife taught school for a number of years and retired with a teacher’s pension. When asked how important that income was to them, he indicated, “When we first met it was a life saver.”

Farmer #4 paid the bills and took care of the financial paperwork in the relationship even though he emphasized that she handled it when he was busy. His wife took care of the home to its fullest extent, “She did that; every bit of it. She done every bit of the cleaning and the cooking and all, yeah.” One of the more challenging times they faced as a family was they both had open heart surgeries at

different times in the marriage, “I had this open heart surgery. Yeah, and then she later had it.”

Crisis loss of spouse. Farmer #4’s spouse had been deceased for a little less than five years at the time of the interview. When asked how long she had been passed away he responded with the actual date of the death, sticking to his previous way of answering how long they were married. Her passing was a complete shock for him and his son. They had just sat down at the table to eat the dinner she had prepared. He said, “Just like we were sitting eating. Fell right on the floor dead.”

At the time of her passing, there really wasn’t anything on the farm to worry about. Farmer #4 noted, “Well we didn’t feed any then, didn’t have much to do then.” There were, however, just day-to-day chores on the farm that needed completing. He took care of everything that needed doing, “Yeah I done it when it came time to do it.” The shock of the loss was what hurt the most during the initial grieving process. He also talked about how that he really has no family other than his son, and he didn’t have that support system to help him get through the mourning period, “I have no ... I’ve got no brothers, no sisters and she had her only sister was dead and her mother died with her dad. I mean it’s just ... and there’s nobody.”

Farm operation post crisis. Since the passing of his spouse, Farmer #4 talked about how his farming operation is now compared to before the passing of his spouse. One of the main things he noted was that his son had to fill the void that his wife’s death left, “On the weekend he would help me. On the weekend he would sometimes do it for me.” He discontinued his vegetable garden because his wife was the primary caretaker of that side of the farm. He also talked about having to

downsize his operation some due to the loss of his spouse. He said, "I don't keep near as many cattle as I did; something like that, that's about the only change." It took him a while to downsize though noting that it was almost a year before he started to thin his cattle herd, giving no reason given other than getting older and no need for so many. Other than the loss of cattle income from the downsizing, he said that his financial stability was about the same. Since he managed the funds primarily in the marriage, handling the books was no problem after his spouse passed away. Since he doesn't really have any family to support him, Farmer #4 noted that the farming community was very helpful in helping him through his wife's passing.

Family life post crisis. The biggest challenges for this farmer came in the form of the family life after the loss of his spouse, "I don't get nothing much good to eat like I did. And the house is not clean. You know how it is...and plenty of other things are not done that she always done." When asked if he knew what changes were in store for him when his wife passed away, he somberly stated that, "I didn't know. It's all new to me." His struggles in the home are accentuated by what he claims as her doing everything, "She did everything that was done to the house and the clothes and changed the beds and everything and she done it all."

The thing that was the most different in his home related to his stomach. He missed "the food" as he stated, "I had the best of eats when she was alive." The loneliness of just sitting around at night continues to be a problem for Farmer #4, "You sit around every night. It's pretty bad out there." Working through his grief has been a lonely process for this farmer. Due to his lack of family support, he had

to mourn and move on by himself. He said, "I got through it by myself because I didn't have nobody to go to." The encouragement he received, however, from friends was a big help he said, "Everybody always encouraged me and says, 'If we can do anything for you we will.' and as I tell you, you know it is."

Adaptation. Farmer #4 talked about things that might have helped him better adapt to life after the passing of his spouse, "Maybe somebody come and maybe got out and rolled around somewhere and talked to you some. It might have helped some." Reflecting on how he had coped with his wife's passing, he talked about what worked for him might not work for someone else. "No, you just have to pick up and do the best you can, make the most of what's left of your life. That's the way you have to do it. That's what worked for me wouldn't work for somebody else maybe."

The shock of the sudden loss of his wife was evident in the whole interview and even though it happened almost five years ago, the wounds were still fresh in Farmer #4's mind. At the close of the interview, he was asked if he had anything else he would like to share; his reply echoed his sadness elegantly, "It's a sad thing, buddy. You don't know, buddy. You don't know."

Farmer #5

Farm operation pre-crisis. This 80-year-old farmer has been farming for over 50 years, mainly tobacco, cattle and hay. Over the years, he said that his operation has changed several times, "Oh, it changed a lot. Yeah it changed. Well a dollar was a dollar when I started. I've got papers that I sold tobacco at .16 cents a pound. And it got to two dollars and something in my life." Toward the later stages

of his life, he decided to semi-retire from farming and start working at the local grocery store as a shelf stocker. When you start getting up in years, farming becomes harder and harder because your body just cannot keep up with the workload he says, "I went to work up at the grocery store, something I could do a little easier." His wife of over 50 years always helped him on the farm. "She cooked and stuff like that, kept things going like that. We had gardens, but she would take care of the mail and stuff." He also mentioned that she was always around when it came time to set tobacco, strip tobacco, etc. After years of marriage, he said that they never really talked about what would become of the farm if something were to happen to one of them, but there was an understanding between them, "We hadn't talked about that for ... we just had it, it belonged to one of us if we live and we had it." To date, his daughter has shown no interest in farming; he says that there is no way she can make the money she is at her job to come back to the farm.

Family life pre-crisis. His marriage lasted 51 years, and during that time, they had one daughter together. When asked to describe his marriage, Farmer #5 talked about teamwork in their marriage and its importance, "We worked together. Yeah. You got to work together, and if you don't work together, you don't come up with nothing. Yeah. Yeah. I had a good woman." For the most part, he took care of the farming operation, and she took care of the home primarily in a traditional gender role partnership. However, when they first married, he mentioned that she worked at a local factory until she realized her need on the farm and home was greater than that income, "She worked at the factory for a while but then I guess she thought that she needed to work here worse, and she kind of helped me." "She done

all that” was his response when asked if she took care of the cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc.

One of the more challenging times they faced as a couple were their days when they struggled with a lack of income. He talked about that if they would have had more money they might have done more, “We always aimed to keep everything going. What we could afford. Do what we could have, probably done more if we could afford it but...we always stayed with what we could take care of.” Even though they only had one income stream they both shared the money, if either one needed money for something it was there, “We had a bank account. We always had a bank account. If she needed money it was there, and if I needed money the money was there.” Teamwork, to hear him tell it, was a hallmark of their marriage.

Crisis loss of spouse. After years of marriage, sickness is what broke them apart and led to her death almost 4 ½ years ago at the time of the interview. He talked about her sickness in detail,

She had, she had sugar and then she had a stroke. And she couldn’t get in and out of the house to no good. We got walkers and things for her to get around in the house but then later she had a hemorrhage. And she fell in there and I went in there and we got her up and she just, I guess, kept getting worse all the time. And we took her to a local hospital and they sent her to a larger university hospital, she stayed there a hundred days, just kept getting worse. They done everything in the book, but it didn’t do any good. She passed away.

During the funeral period, Farmer #5 said that he took care of everything on the farm and planned the funeral. Due to her sickness, he noted that the initial grieving process was rather minimal because, “Well, I was expectin’ it. And I was just waitin’ on the call.” However, he talked about the overall grieving process and commented, “You don’t get out of it.” He was still grieving over his lost spouse at the time of

interview and he said that he would until he was gone. The person that provided him the most support since his wife's passing was his sister-in-law, "She comes and helps if I need her. All I have to do is call her...and she is there, but you know you've got to do it yourself."

Farm operation post crisis. After his wife passed away, Farmer #5 just went right on farming like he had been doing before the death, "When she passed away, I just went on working." It was not until a couple years after that he decided to sell his cattle and just primarily concentrate on his hay production. He himself experienced sickness, "I sold the cattle. I had cancer in that arm, and I couldn't..." His elbow had cancer in the bone, and he had to make several trips to the hospital for treatment; it was not until then that he decided the cattle were too much for him, "There's a whole lot of work feedin' cattle and takin' care of 'em, and they've got to be doctored, and they've got to be fed. And if you can't take care of 'em, you don't need 'em." He kept his job at the store and his hay but he let the cattle go, which in the interview you could tell bothered him. I think that he missed them; he missed taking care of something after his wife passed.

The farming community chipped in and helped Farmer #5 after he lost his wife, "Whatever I need, I just holler at 'em, and they come to me." He also said that if there were some resources available to farmers when they lose a spouse that, "It would have been good. Yeah. For, you know, that's a great big lick." From whom that resource came from didn't matter, but receiving something would have been helpful. Farmer #5's response to the biggest difference in his farming operation since his wife's passing reinforced the strength of their partnership. "Well, I don't

know really what it would be. But you miss that spouse. I'll tell you, you do. You've got things to do that she always helped you with."

Family life post crisis. Similar to other farmers adapting to home life after the death of their spouse, Farmer #5 has had to do several things different in the home that he had never done before, namely laundry. "My daughter has to come down now and pick my washing up, take it, come back next week and bring one, and take one with her. It makes a lot of difference. You got to have a lot of clothes when you do that." When asked what was something challenging in the home since losing his wife, he smiled and said, "Oh there's a lot of things after you lose your wife that she would do, that you've got to do and you know? It's a lot different. I drove to town this morning to eat breakfast, so that makes a lot of difference." Whether or not he was expecting his new lifestyle, when asked he replied, "Well, I knowed it was going to be a job but we all go through jobs. We've got to live with it. And there's not a whole lot that anybody can do about it." The things that his wife always took care of is what Farmer #5 struggles with still to this day, "I have to go to the mailbox now and get the bills and things and pay 'em. I didn't do that before. And I go to the grocery store. And do that. So. I didn't do that. She always took care of that stuff."

However, his biggest task since losing his spouse has been learning how to cook. He says that he just gets by but doesn't try his hand at much cooking, "Cookin' would be the hardest, but I don't try much cookin'. For I don't know much about cookin'. I can get by but that's about it." The struggles with getting through the new chores inside the home cannot compare to the emptiness felt daily since losing his spouse, "Definitely just you miss 'em. And you need 'em. You know? You need a

woman to help you. I'll tell you. You don't miss 'em till they're gone." When asked if he had remarried Farmer #5 laughed, showed his own comical perception of his situation and answered, "No, there ain't no woman wants an 80-year-old man to take care of." The tone of his statement also meant that he wouldn't be interested even if there were someone willing to take care of his 80-year-old self. He had already had his one great wife.

Adaptation. When coping with the loss of his spouse, Farmer #5 said that he never really did anything special, "It kind of worked, you don't sit down and just think about it. You've got to move around and kind of get it off your mind." Getting it off your mind is the best thing you can do he said, "If you don't, why, I don't know what would happen to you. It's not a good thing to keep on your mind." Being rational about the whole situation was also helpful he said, "It's going to happen to all of us. Were all goin' that road. And you don't sit there and just grieve yourself to death. That's harder on you..."

Nothing really hindered Farmer #5 from adapting according to him,

No. No. I expected it, you know. I knowed it was going to happen sooner or later. It's the same way with me. It's going to happen. When you get around 80 years old, it can be in a minute.

He also said that it was just something that has to wear off of anyone facing death and grieving for a loved one, "Time's got to wear it off. The more you thing about it, the worse you be. You've got to lay it back." When asked if he had any advice for farmers who might be facing the same situation he initially didn't think his advice would be of use to anyone, "Well, I don't know whether my advice would be good to have advice from or not. It's a bad loss." Then he took a moment to think and

decided he would give his advice, "You don't have any idea what it is till you lose 'em. When you lose 'em you'll really miss 'em. I'll tell you that." The awareness of his situation hit home in every aspect of this interview and never more evident at the close of the visit, "A good woman is hard to find. So you got one, you better keep her." Farmer #5 had his for 51 years, a long time on paper but not long enough for him.

Farmer #6

Farm operation pre-crisis. The family farm that Farmer #6 operates has been in his family for 90 years, but he has only been farming for a little over 50 years. At first the farm "was primarily a tobacco farm," and now the farm is mainly a beef cattle operation. "Now, we usually winter about a hundred head, close to about 50 cows, and we raise all of the feed here on the farm for the cattle operation." When he and his wife were first married, their operation looked a lot different than it does now:

Beginning of the marriage I didn't do a lot of farming on this farm. My father-in-law was a big farmer and I did a lot of partner training and farming with him. We raised 70,000 pounds of tobacco and had 300 acres of corn and I had a hog operation and cattle operation. The hog operation was where I lived and the cattle operation was here. And we raised corn and tobacco.

His wife was always helping him on the farm, he said, especially with the tobacco operation, "When you start setting 30 acres of tobacco or 35 acres, it takes a lot of help. And her and her mother would cook for all of our workhands, and when they weren't cooking for all of the workhands they were riding in the setter setting plants." Farmer #6's oldest son has now taken a partnership role in the farm and helps him with the day-to-day tasks. This partnership is one of the reasons that he

and his wife never really talked about a farm succession plan or a will of any kind, “For several years I only owned half of the farm. And I was able to acquire it all and got my son in partnership with me.”

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #6 was married for 21 years, and they had three sons together who are all now independent and grown. When talking about his sons he was proud of the fact that all three of his sons have Master’s degrees from accredited colleges and universities.

When asked to describe his marriage Farmer #6 said, “My marriage was real good. We had three children and we just thought we were doing everything the we were supposed to do.” His wife was a local county school teacher, and he noted that her income was the most important in the relationship, “It was very important. You know my wife teaching school was, contributed almost as much to the family income as I was. And with her help we were able to put away a little money in college funds for the kids.” Since he was farming and trenched in bills Farmer #6 took care of all of the financial paperwork in the relationship.

As far as traditional gender roles were concerned, Farmer #6 said that even though her parents were that way, they shared those chores. “You know that’s the way her parents were, they had traditional roles. But we shared those things.” He also noted that the only thing they ever had a problem with in their marriage was probably over monetary things, “You know, in the farming business, you’ve always got payments for equipment or land payments or whatever, but I’d say monetary things were probably the biggest challenge in our marriage.” With things rolling

along like they wanted Farmer #6's wife became ill with ovarian cancer and fought the disease for several years, all of this while the kids were still at home.

Crisis loss of spouse. At the time of the interview, Farmer #6's wife had been deceased for 21 years. Her sickness lasted four years, "She had several major surgeries, several rounds of chemo, and she just fought it a long time." During the funeral period, he took care of the farming operation, the funeral, and his boys. The initial grieving process was different for this farmer due to the fact that he still had young children in the home, "It was real tough. I had three little boys sitting there looking at me. And I had to do whatever it took to provide for them and make sure I was there when they needed me." So he didn't really have time to be grieving, he still had to be dad to the boys who needed him more than ever. His grieving lasted for several years but faded over time. "Oh I don't know. It's just something that kind of, you get away from over several years." Having a strong sense of being a strong male, he gave a self-sufficient response when asked who helped get him through the mourning period, "I never really asked anybody for help. And I think most males would be that way."

Farm operation post crisis. With the added responsibilities at home taking care of his boys, Farmer #6 knew that changes in his farming operation were going to be imminent:

When the passing of the spouse, I had more responsibilities as a parent, as far as going to, taking them to athletic events, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, you know. And I just, that's when I got out of the tobacco business all together. And I stayed in the corn business another year. And then I got out of the tobacco and corn business. Because I just needed to spend more time with the children.

These changes were anticipated he said, "I kind of expected them all along. There weren't any surprises." With farming not being a viable option to assist in taking care of his boys, he kept the farm but kind of phased out the farming operation to stay home with his boys. He only had a few cows to manage and a little hay to put up for their feed. He explained,

I got out of the farming business, so I could spend more time with the children, and I did. And I'm glad I did. Because they needed me, they needed somebody to be there all the time. And I just made sure that I had the time to do it.

Of course, his income dipped after the passing of his spouse, but it was the medical bills that really ate up their savings, "We had a modest savings, and we spent all of that on doctors and hospitals." True to his independent nature, he did not turn to anyone for any financial advice after the passing of his spouse.

Family life post crisis. Before his wife passed away, Farmer #6 and his wife talked about what changes were coming down the line for them both, "I had a lot of time to think about it, and my spouse and I, we had discussed those kinds of things." The biggest change in the home after the passing of his spouse was that he had to start taking care of everything:

Well, you know, we had to take care of ourselves, the boys and I. And we cooked. And when the dishes were dirty it went in the washer. And when you took something off you put it in the hamper or put it on a hanger. And we just learned to provide for ourselves.

The most challenging thing for this now single father and his sons to master was, "I'd say laundry and meals. They were real challenging." They adjusted though, learning everything together just like the laundry they had such initial trouble with, "You know once we learned how, you know that you shouldn't wash a bright color

with your tidy whites or you wind up with pink underwear-we learned.” When asked to pinpoint one thing that is the most different about his home life, Farmer #6 talked about how much closer he and his sons were now after their mother passed away, “I think it made my three sons and I much, much closer.” After 11 years of singlehood and raising his sons, this widower remarried.

Adaptation. The people that helped Farmer #6 the most during after the passing of his spouse were closer to home than you might think, “We just learned to stick together and help each other.” He talked about friends and family helping as well, but at the end of the day it was the father-sons bond that paved the way. When asked if there had been anything hindering him from coping, he could not think of anything. He also could not recollect any one group that helped him during his time of loss. He went back to the sticking together statement, restating its importance to them. When asked what else he would like to share, he said, “Just keep, you know, keep family and friends close. And your friends will try to do, you know they will, they’re there for your benefit too.” One interesting aspect to Farmer #6 was that he told the researcher after the study that there is no one thing anyone could have done for him, given him or said to him that would have helped him during that time of his life. He said, “When you lose your wife, it might be different for me than anyone else because no one’s situation will be the same when it comes to death.” His perception was that the only thing that could have helped him after his wife passed was his sons.

Farmer #7

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farmer #7 has owned the farm he currently works for 24 years where he has over the years run cattle, horses, and sheep, as well as tobacco and green peppers. At the beginning of his marriage to his late wife, he did not farm for a living. It wasn't until later on in their marriage that they got involved with agriculture.

Well the beginning of my marriage I worked at a public job. I drove a truck, a tractor-trailer semi, until 1972 and I had my retirement in 1972 and I moved back to Kentucky and bought a farm near here. I had 145 acres there. We raised tobacco and peppers and cattle.

His biggest production crop was green peppers. He had a contract with several vegetable distribution hubs in his area and he provided fresh green peppers to all of them. His wife was a full-time missionary, working with the youth at a local ministry camp and didn't spend much time on the farm. He wanted to help her with her mission work and so he took care of the farm. "She was my personal messenger. I supported her." Farmer #7 and his wife each had their own wills made to ensure that everything was left to the surviving member of the marriage no matter what the circumstance. Now that his wife has passed, anything that is left from his estate will go to charity, "I got a will made out, and it all goes to charity."

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #7's marriage lasted 51 years, and they did not have any children. When asked to describe his marriage, he replied, "My marriage was fantastic. Didn't have no problem in my marriage. We never stayed away from each other, not a night, if we was mad at each other. It was a perfect marriage as far as I'm concerned." His wife ran a local grocery store, restaurant that they owned together, and she worked at the youth mission camp. Due to her

expertise with business finances, she always took care of the paperwork in the relationship, while he farmed and managed the local Post Office.

Well we had a grocery store for nine years and a restaurant, you know. And I run the post office. Do all this and I stayed busy and she run the store and the restaurant and helped me, you know, with stuff, with bookkeeping.

As far as home division of labor, they had a traditional gender role marriage; anything that was to be done in the home, she took care of it for over 50 years of marriage. When referring to how things were during their marriage, he indicated, "She took care of me. You know." The only struggle they ever faced as a couple was, "Sickness, her rheumatoid arthritis. Her and me both had sickness. I had, I've had two strokes and a heart attack."

Crisis loss of spouse. At the time of the interview, Farmer #7's wife had been deceased almost two years. He talked about her struggle with arthritis for 20 years and what ultimately took her away from him. "She had rheumatoid arthritis for about 20 some years. But what killed her, cancer killed her, and the really fast moving kind. She had it from June till October." During the funeral period, he took care of everything on the farm and the funeral itself. His brother-in-laws helped as well, but he took care of everything. His initial grieving process was really rough, slowly getting better, "It's still, it's still rough, but I stay busy now. But the grieving process it just, sometimes like I just wake up and say, 'She's gone.' You know?" He also mentioned that he still hears her in the house at times. "Sometimes I hear her walking in the house, you know, stuff like that." When asked who helped get him through the initial grieving stage he replied, "the Lord and my church family."

Farm operation post crisis. After the passing of his spouse, Farmer #7 had not changed his farming operation. “No, I haven’t done anything different. Same, same ...” He talked about his desire to stay busy now that his wife is gone and that the farm allows him to keep his mind occupied. His financial situation has somewhat changed though because of all of the doctor bills he had to pay, but he did not have to turn to anyone for financial advice. When asked if he would have liked to have received something to help him as a farmer with the loss of his spouse, he quickly stated, “Not at this age and stage of my life.” He thought that nothing could help him because he was at an advanced age in life and it literally didn’t matter to him. However, he did go on to say that if there were something available he would have wanted it to come from his church pastor. Trying to keep the farm exactly the way it was before he lost his spouse has been the biggest challenge on the farm after the passing of his spouse, “Well to me just keeping it clean. You know, getting the pasture clean and stuff.”

Family life post crisis. Dealing with the loss of his wife in the home has been a real challenge for Farmer #7. To hear him put it, “It was just rough.” The things that he had to start doing in the home according to him were, “Cooking, laundry, dishwashing, you know, housecleaning.” Out of those the hardest area to master has been “probably cooking” since he had to start “reading recipes.” His in-laws also used to visit him more while his wife was alive and the way he talked he really missed seeing them. “Well they visited me more. My in-laws did, you know. Because that was their loved ones. So I don’t have as many visitors as I used to have. But my home is still open.”

Farmer #7 was asked to pinpoint one thing about his family life that was the most different after the passing of his spouse. His response, “Lonely. I’m lonely, you know, and um...” Talking about his loneliness kind of choked him up, and he finished up his statement with, “But anyway, it’s my family, the closeness of my family and love, my church family and stuff like that.” He has not remarried and does not have any plans to do so in the near future.

Adaptation. Several people in Farmer #7’s circle of life helped get him through the toughest period in his life, referencing his niece and her two children playing a huge role in his recovery. He mentioned her when asked what someone had done to help get him through his loss. “Well my niece was a big part of my life to get through this. Her and her kids.” However one thing that made the grieving process more difficult was disposing of his wife’s possessions. “It didn’t help to get rid of her clothes, her personal belongings. That didn’t help, but I had to do it because of memories. You know?” Even though he acknowledged that it didn’t help him to get rid of her things he also stated in his answer that he was doing it so that it would get better. He didn’t want to see her things go, but he didn’t want to have to look at them all the time.

The group that provided him with the most support was his church. When asked what would have helped him during his time of loss he didn’t have an answer, “No, I just, I just don’t know.” His advice for farmers facing his same situation, “Tell them I recommend that they depend on the Lord. You see that’s all, the only thing that can help you.” He also wanted to make sure that people did not rush to fall back

into marriage or a relationship just because they are hurting on the inside from their loss,

Be yourself. Don't run out and grab some old, you know, stuff like that. Just be patient and the Lord will send you somebody if he wants you to have somebody. You see. Because you just don't- I seen-I've seen this happen before. People think they need a lady, you know, or the wife needs a husband. You know, he don't work, and then they got baggage and you gotta cope with that. That will make your life more miserable.

At the close of the interview, he gave the best statement he could about his marriage, when asked if he had anything else, he said, "Yes. She was part of me. You know?"

Farmer #8

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farmer #8 has been farming since 1959. Over the years, his operation has changed quite substantially in many areas but most significantly in the size of his operation. "When I first come in I had 160 acres here and of course I leased that after three years. I leased it until we had 600 and some acres across the road and then I rented tobacco all over the county." His operation does not produce tobacco anymore; hay, cattle, and corn are primarily the areas produced. His wife worked on the farm from day one of their marriage, "Hell, she housed tobacco. She done everything." His son has primarily taken over the day-to-day operation of the farm, but Farmer #8 still checks in on things. "Of course every once in a while I look in on him." He and his wife made a will that leaves everything on the farm and in the home to their only son. His son has a full-time job as an administrator of a school system, and Farmer #8 says, "He worships his job." So his son has not been able to keep up with the capacity of farming he was doing when he had been managing the farm full time.

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #8 was married for 58 years, and they had a son, who was considered a miracle:

The doctor said my wife had very little chance of ever having a kid, and two years after we moved back on the farm, my God, she got pregnant. We were in for an adoption at the time. And when he came along of course we cancelled it.

When their miracle came along, Farmer #8 said that, "We built our whole life around our son." He spoke fondly of his relationship with his wife. "My marriage was a funny thing. It was a partnership. It wasn't just a marriage."

He and his wife ran a small boot and clothing store for over 30 years, which ended up being a full-time job for his wife. It was a funny story; he said, "She went to buy me a new pair of work shoes and ended up buying the store that night..." Their partnership worked because before they bought the store he said they talked it out. "Our deal was when we bought the store that ah, she'd run it and I'd run the farm. And that's the way it happened." The income from the store was very important to them because the farm income kept the farm running, and the store income kept the home running. His wife also took care of the home in a traditional role, "My wife ah, ah, she done everything. She did ah, she's the best cook in the world." They never really had problems in their marriage because to hear him proclaim it, "We never had much challenge...to tell you the truth." During the interview, you could tell that he really had the greatest wife and marriage anyone could imagine.

Crisis loss of spouse. Farmer #8's wife had been deceased for about three years at the time of the interview. She passed away suddenly after breaking her hip in a fall. Just days before her accident, they had talked about their lives together,

"We decided that we had had a perfect life. Everything had worked exactly the way we had wanted it to." His son took care of the farming operation and all of the funeral arrangements during the funeral period. The initial grieving process for Farmer #8 didn't really hit home until he was in bed one night, "The reaching and her not there is what you miss. When you turn over you know damn well she's not there. And that hits hard." When asked how long it has taken to get through the mourning period, he said, "You...you don't never do. Never does. It...you...there's a place...I know what...I know what my wife was. And, and, and...eventually you face facts." He talked about how his family helped him the most after the passing of his spouse. His son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren really helped get him through his loss.

Farm operation post crisis. With the stress of dealing with the passing of his wife, Farmer #8 decided to turn the farm over to his son completely. "Just to tell you the truth, I just quit." He said that he never expected to really quit the farm but the death of his spouse and his health really changed his mind on giving it up.

I never thought anything about that. I know getting old...and I know that ah, I was going to have to hang it up one of these days. Of course I've had four heart attacks. And ah, that's given me plenty of warning. Even though his wife had been sick and in the hospital a bit before she passed, he did not take a financial hit because of a life insurance policy that had matured a few years earlier. That money helped take care of the funeral and doctor bills. The farming community would have chipped to help him during his time of mourning, but he said, "I didn't need no help. But of course I had my son to help me take care of everything." When asked if he would have liked to have received something to help him through his loss he responded. "I didn't need help, ah we ah, we ... were in

pretty good shape.” The researcher observed that Farmer #8 was very cognizant of his age and luck in living as long as he had with his wife of 58 years.

Family life post crisis. The changes that were in store for Farmer #8 were somewhat expected but did not come into fruition until he was mired in the middle of his wife’s passing. After the passing of his spouse, he struggled with all of the attention he was getting from his family, “It wore me out kind of. You know everything ... too damn much attention. I finally told them, got to leave me alone. Let me work this out myself.” His son saw that his father needed help but also needed some space and built a room on the side of his home so that Farmer #8 could have his own living quarters but be close to family. Now that he is living right next to his son, he has more freedom but also the added chores that his wife used to always do. “I have to wash the dishes. Keep the refrigerator full.” He admits that his son and daughter-in-law still help him a lot. When speaking of his daughter-in-law, he talked very lovingly but acknowledged that she made him do things he didn’t normally do. “She makes me change clothes every day and night. And irons it. Hell, my wife didn’t do that. She didn’t iron. Presses all my dog gone clothes. Well, you can see the crease in these I’ve been wearing.” Women’s work is what Farmer #8 said he now has to do, and it is a challenge, “The challenge is washing dishes; I got to do what I call women’s work.”

The biggest difference in his family life is the fact that, “No wife. And there’s nobody to complain to. We sat and we talked everything out.” When asked if he had remarried, Farmer #8 quoted a friend, “I had the best to start with, why would he worry about to try to get something else?” He then thought about remarrying and

said, "I wouldn't even consider it. You're not going to duplicate after 58 years, by God there ain't no way in hell that you're going to duplicate what you had."

Adaptation. What helped get Farmer #8 through his loss was his family, mainly his grandchildren. They check on him almost every day. Nothing really hindered his recovery from losing his spouse but he added that, "You don't never get through it. You don't never get through it, but you ... you find a place to fit it." When his wife was in the hospital trying to survive her health scare and finally passed away, he tried to find someone to blame but there was no one to blame, "I wanted somebody to grab at and I couldn't think of a soul." His advice for farmers going through the same process, "Just take ... take it easy by God and ... and ... face facts. You know they're lost. Just use common sense is what I think you got to do." His common sense is what has gotten him to the calm state he is in currently after losing his life companion.

Farmer #9

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farmer #9 has been farming for 45 years; his father got him started when he was a young boy. His operation has changed over the years, "When we first started we were just into tobacco and cattle, and now we've acquired more land and we're in cattle and corn and more hay, and no tobacco." His operation expanded from the beginning of his marriage to today. "I would say that it grew from, my wife wanted to expand and have more cattle, and she was pretty good help on the farm, so, in that way I probably wouldn't have advanced as much." His wife really helped him out on the farm, "She would set tobacco. She helped top tobacco, worked cattle, you know, haul hay, she's right

there any time I needed.” Their only daughter also really helps out on the farm, “Everyday she calls and wants to know is there anything that needs to be done on the farm that I can help you with?” Farmer #9 and his wife had a will and farm succession plan made up, and everything is to be left to their daughter if something happens to both of them.

Family life pre-crisis. Their marriage lasted 32 years; they had one daughter and one grandson. When asked to describe his marriage, Farmer #9 talked about being best friends and high school sweethearts,

Well, it was a very good relationship. She was my best friend and confidante and we went to church every Sunday morning, and she encouraged me even when times was bad, you know so it was excellent. We were high school sweethearts and we got married. We were best buddies.

His wife was a tax preparation professional and later on in life worked for the local county judge executive compiling all of their books. That income was very important to their marriage, it provided a steady flow of funds that the farm sometimes did provide or only provided once or twice a year. With her career as a bookkeeper she naturally took care of the books in the marriage and for the farm, “She done it all.” There were traditional gender roles in the marriage as well, “I would leave early in the morning, I would work most of the day, farm probably up to 10:00 PM at night. So she kept the house and took care of our daughter.” One of the hardest things Farmer #9 and his spouse had to overcome within their marriage were fiscal matters, “When we first started out, times were pretty rough, as newlyweds. And you know I told her at one time, we had the one farm, we had to pay for it twice, we had to refinance when times got hard. But that was probably the most, early on that was the roughest.”

Crisis loss of spouse. Farmer #9's wife passed away two years prior to the time of the interview. She died from cancer that she fought hard for four years. "When we first found out, she had stage IV colon, colorectal cancer, for four years. She fought the good fight." During the funeral period, the farm was taken care of by his sister and church family; "they would come here at the house, and help out all they could."

Farmer #9 described the initial grieving process, "It was difficult, because like we'd been best friends." When asked how long it took him to get out of the grieving process, he replied with a counter question more fitting to his situation, "You mean, if you ever get out of it?" He didn't think he would ever be out of the grieving process for his lost spouse, but he knew at the time that he had to move on the best he could.

I started going to a local health organization, and they have a program where the spouse goes and you meet with them. And I went for about six months and at that point I knew that, you know, I was probably ready to handle everything on my own.

The people that provided Farmer #9 with the most support during his time of loss,

The church itself. I would say we were super active in the church. As a matter of fact, she got me started 32 years ago when we got married I attended her church. And they were just awesome, giving me encouragement and calling me, and the phone was constantly, they wanted to take me out to dinner and just kept me active. That was a great help.

Farm operation post crisis. Farmer #9 said that at the time of his wife's passing, "I had no idea what that was going to encompass." Some of the changes that he has had to make to his farming operation are that he doesn't like having to get a later start to the day.

Well, I get a little later start because I found out, believe it or not, what your spouse has to go through keeping the house clean and other things, jobs that she would do that I have to do now. Washing the clothes and it just takes a little bit more time now than it did before.

His operation was really affected during the first year after his spouse's death.

It slowed down a little bit because you know at that point I didn't really see that anything was important anymore. I had a wrong focus on life. But, yeah, I kept it maintained but it was just, I wouldn't call it a standstill but I didn't seek any improvements or anything, I just kept everything at an even keel.

There were some financial strains to his lifestyle after his wife passed away but nothing devastating.

It wasn't anything that I couldn't handle. But having to refinance and not having that second income coming in. She made pretty good money in her tax accounting business and working for the judge executive. So you know there was a pretty good salary lost, you know.

Even though he experienced some financial troubles after his wife passed away, Farmer #9 said that he handled it all internally and didn't have to turn to anyone for advice. The farming community also helped him get over his loss. Several farming organizations he and his wife were members of really helped keep him going after his wife passed. When asked if he would have liked to have received something that would have helped him through the loss of his spouse, he liked the idea, "I believe that would be a great benefit to anybody, just to know which direction to turn." The person whom he thinks that information should come from didn't really matter as long as it was delivered personally; "somebody one-on-one or groups that are actually the best because they can even share experiences for somebody that's already been there." The one thing that is the most different about his farming operation since the passing of his spouse would be his, "Record keeping." Keeping

good records is what his wife had done, so he struggles with keeping both the farm and home paperwork up to date.

Family life post crisis. Now that his wife has passed, Farmer #9 thinks that one of the biggest changes in his home life is that, “I don’t get out as much. We were, well I still am, pretty active in an agricultural organization, so some of the activities that we done slowed down.” Struggling with housework and the recordkeeping has really been the big issue for him in the home since the passing of his wife:

The whole scenario of the housekeeping and keeping the clothes washed up. The major thing that was, that I had never done like I said was the paperwork, and the income taxes and the tax bills, you know. I would come home from work and from a business aspect of it, and I’d say ‘Here’s how many hours I put in for this person.’ And she would figure the bills, and all of that stuff. Actually the paperwork was the big step, yeah. The paperwork was the most challenging. Yes.

Farmer #9 has not remarried but didn’t really seem opposed to it nor really want it either. According to him, the biggest difference in his home life since the passing of his spouse is, “The emptiness, and the holidays. You know, Christmas was her special time. And you know you always think about that during the holiday seasons.” His personal awareness of where he was at in life and the reflections on his marriage was very uplifting to see. He went to work on getting better from losing her rather than letting it bring him down. His progress shows in his tone and confidence in his situation.

Adaptation. The one thing that has really helped get Farmer #9 through the loss of his spouse has been frequent visits on the weekend from his grandson:

He comes and spends weekends with me, and he wants to be on the farm, and help us work, help me work on our old cars together. And I believe he was a Godsend. He had a reason for being put here.

There were some things that hindered his recovery though. The one that stood out was, "Going out with my friends, sometimes you felt like you were the, per se, the fifth wheel. They were with their spouses and just being alone." When asked what would have helped him get through it he didn't think anything could have made it better or prepared him for what was coming, "I don't think there's any way you can really be prepared. Even though I had four years to know it was coming. I wasn't prepared."

Farmer #9 was asked if he had anything else that he would like to share about losing his spouse, and he gave a very detailed description of his situation and picking himself up off the ground for himself:

Uh, mostly it's just that, you know, the fact of the emptiness and the hurdle that you've really got to get over. She told me when she got sick, and this kind of relates to my life. When she got sick she says, 'Well, I can get up this morning and go on with the rest of my life or I can lay here and pity myself, and just, and let's spend quality time with the rest of my family for the rest of my life.' And I think that's the way I had to realize life. You know, I could lay here and feel sorry for myself because she's gone, or I could get up and do something about it, and that's kind of what I had to do and I get the advice. And I'm also a church leader. And it's funny how it works out. Sometimes when I go to read Scriptures to the church, it will be underlined or something where she has went back there and it, she had underlined stuff that would help her make it through the day, and I'll see that and then I'll just pass it on to the congregation and it just makes everybody feel good, you know it just does?

His advice for farmers dealing with the same situation that he had gone through is,

Seek somebody that's been through the same experience, and kind of get a grasp on what is coming, to be a little prepared. You're never totally prepared, but it's better to be just a little prepared than none, to know that your life is about to change.

Farmer #10

Farm operation pre-crisis. Farmer #10 served in the Army when he was a young man, and he was stationed in Germany. His wife moved with him for a few months to Germany before they returned home to no jobs, but he quickly found out that he had a farm. The farm belonged to his wife's father, and he was getting up in age and was ready to hand the farm off to Farmer #10 and his spouse. Before that day, he had never farmed a day in his life, knew nothing about it. But to this day he has been farming for 60 years. The farm was primarily a beef cattle operation; they were handed two different breeds of cattle. "Her father gave us Herefords and Black Angus cattle, and neither one of us knew what would happen when we bred them together, but it turned out to be that that was the thing to do."

Once he was in control of the farm, they expanded the herd from about 65 head to over 300 at one point in time. He also started to produce his own feed; hundreds of acres of corn and hay were produced to provide for his ever-expanding herd. He has one son who is in primary control of the farm now and will take over the operation full time when Farmer #10 gives it up. His wife never really helped him out on the farm; he only recalled a couple of instances where he thought she contributed to the manual labor section of the farm, "I can remember once when I was fixing to milk the cow and another time she drove the tractor while I was throwing hay bales or a corn pod or something out but that's it." During their years together, he and his wife never talked about a will or any farm succession plans. He did note though that he does now have a will.

Family life pre-crisis. Farmer #10 and his spouse were married for 57 years; they had three children together, two sons and one daughter. When asked to describe his marriage, he acknowledged his mistakes in the marriage, “Well, it was a good marriage. I think I’m to blame for a lot of problems we had because I stayed out till late at night and wasn’t much of a companion.” When he met his wife, she was working at an Army fort as a secretary, but when they moved back home she never held another paying job. However, she was a full-time farming wife and took care of everything in the home and the children. He also talked about her community service, “She was very busy. She did a lot of things, community-wide and enjoyed arts. She did stained glass and so many things. She was busy doing her things and I was busy doing mine.” He took care of the paperwork in a traditional gender role marriage. The challenging thing that he described during his marriage was,

Um, I don’t think that she was very really interested in the farm. I don’t think she was looking forward to where it was going to. I don’t think that my abilities and exertions were much appreciated. I think it was me that wanted to do what I did, put up new buildings and repair old ones and it was up to me to decide where to plant the corn and oversee the crops and all that. And, uh, I don’t know that she ever really complained. I do think that she wondered why I wasn’t making any money but maybe that’s because she wasn’t part of the farm.

Crisis loss of spouse. At the time of the interview, it had been four years since Farmer #10’s wife had passed away from cancer. She had been sick for a while, but at the end, he said I think she knew it was time.

I think that she knew that she was not gonna get over it and, as a matter of fact, she said, one Friday morning she said, “You’re not gonna be able to take care of me any longer. You better take me to the hospital” and I am pretty sure she knew it was a one-way trip.

She passed away five days later. During the funeral period, his workhands and son took care of the farming operation for him so that he could concentrate on the arrangements. When asked about the initial grieving process, Farmer #10 gave a one-word answer, "Terrible." He said that it was, "Harder on me than it was on the three kids. Without a doubt, I still grieve." When talking about how long it has taken him to get out of the mourning period,

Well, yes I'm sure that, I, am out of the initial mourning period. It's just, well, you haven't lost your wife yet. But when she died, why I mean it was just a hole there and the hole has never gone completely away. During the mourning period, Farmer #10 said that his "kids" provided him with the most support during the loss of his spouse.

Farm operation post crisis. After the passing of his spouse, Farmer #10 never made any changes to his farming operation. He talked about how the farm was pretty self-sustaining with his workhands and son in the operation. Financially, he was in good shape as well because to hear him put it, "Well, she really didn't supply much of the finances, if any. She inherited some stuff." Because they did not have a will and they had significant assets in land and cattle, Farmer #10 had to hire a lawyer who he credits as his financial advisor to resolve the financial issues in court. He also noted that the farming community never really helped him out on the farm because he said that he didn't need their help, "We didn't need anybody to help as long as my son was there and the two men were there." If resources were available to Farmer #10, he said that he would not have wanted to receive any. He said that he was doing okay. He also could not pinpoint anything that might be different on his farm after the passing of his spouse.

Family life post crisis. After the passing of his spouse, Farmer #10 said, “I don’t think that I figured on anything being different” when referring to his life without his spouse. The biggest difference of not having his wife was that, “Love life is not there anymore, uh, we pretty much lived our own lives.” Some things that he now has to do that she always took care of are, “The cooking, housecleaning, and doing the dishes and things like that. Laundry.” He noted that these tasks were really not that challenging to him, “I picked up cooking, whatever I had to cook and, uh, by necessity. I wasn’t used to anybody really waiting on me. I mean except what she did but...” He has not remarried and according to him, “I haven’t even thought about it.” The biggest difference in his home life after the loss of his spouse is, “Loneliness at night probably because I’m there by myself seven nights a week unless I do something, kids invite me out, or I go someplace else.”

Adaptation. The people who helped Farmer #10 the most besides his family would have been his minister and then his friends. “My belief in God and Jesus and church. We both went to church always. Never missed. And that was something that we did together weekly.” Nothing particularly hindered his recovery from spousal loss, “I can’t think of anything” and did not have any advice for other farmers facing this same situation.

Chapter 6: Research Findings

Although these 10 farm widowers experienced the same crisis, the loss of their spouse, their farming operations, family life, and adaptation differed by their stressors, resources, and perception of the stressors.

In the following section, common themes that emerge from the widowers stories are identified using the lens of the Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis.

Interpreting Results through the Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis

Manning et al. (2011) described the Double ABCX Model of Family Stress as it, “adds post crisis variables in an effort to describe life stressors, family resources, and the meaning of the event over time” (p. 321). The Double ABCX Model uses the original letter elements of A, B, C, and X but expands on them by adding a second corresponding un-capitalized letter to the framework. The resulting elements for the Double ABCX Model are aA, bB, cC, and xX. The capitalized letters A, B, C, and X refer to factors preceding the event; changes in those elements over time and subsequent to the crisis are depicted as a, b, c, and x.

For the purpose of this study, the pre- and post-crisis situations and adaptations have been separated into two domains of the farmers’ lives: their farming operation and their family life. The next step of analysis included categorizing each widower’s comments into the categories of the Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis. Each interviewee’s pre-crisis farmer operation comments were coded as into the categories of stressor (A), resources (B), and perception of stressors (C). The process was repeated for the pre-crisis family life section. Then, for the post-crisis section of both farming operation and family life responses were

coded into the categories of stressors (aA), resources (bB), and perception of stressors (cC). A summary chart of this data for each of the 10 farmers is included in Appendix 4.

The following two sections focus on the themes that emerged from examining farm widowers coping and adaptation in both their farming operation and family life. For each component of the Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis, there were recurring themes that described their situations prior to and after their wife's passing.

Themes from Farming Operation Data

A: Stressors

Health issues for the wife. Almost all of the men interviewed talked about how their wives in some way or another were major contributors on the farm. Sickness in a farming family only escalates the already tedious nature of the profession because it keeps people from their work. Out of the 10 farmers interviewed for this study, 7 said that their wife's sickness decreased their ability to work on the farm. The spouse did not necessarily give up on the farm; rather, they had a decreased workload during their sickness on the production side. Dealing with the sickness was bad enough for the farming family, but dealing with losing one of the cogs in the wheel on the farm only exacerbated the stress of the situation. Farmer #1 really talked about how important it was to his wife to stay in the mindset that she was still helping on the farm by fixing her husband and farm workers supper even though she was getting sicker by the day, "You didn't come in and expect a big meal, and even after, after she lost that leg she managed to fix

dinner in her own walker.” His wife had lost her leg and was still willing to contribute as much as she could to the farm by having meals cooked for the men. It was teamwork, according to Farmer #5, that kept his wife contributing on the farm during her sickness, “We worked together. Yeah. You got to work together, and if you don’t work together you don’t come up with nothing. Yeah. Yeah. I had a good woman.” No matter the situation to the male farmers, the importance of their wives contributing on the farm was a major theme emerging from these interviews.

Tobacco buyout. The Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004 forever changed the landscape that is Kentucky Agriculture. Of the 10 farmers interviewed for this study, five of them identified the tobacco buyout as a stressor because of its dramatic redirection of agriculture with one single act of legislation. This buyout caused the farmers to find a different source of income if they chose to stop growing tobacco. In this case, the five tobacco farmers in this study decided to stop growing the crop. With the main source of their income now gone, they had to decide what to do with their farming operation to make money. The area that they chose to expand upon was in beef cattle production. All of the interviewees affected by the buyout were already producing beef cattle and chose to expand that area of their farm to make up for the lost money on the farm. This was stressful for the family because of its misdirection of a traditional mindset towards tobacco production on the farm and into a completely different direction of making money, not necessarily an unfamiliar direction but a new main priority direction.

Monetary payments on the farm. Running a farm is stressful because of dramatic fluctuations in conditions during the growing season from year to year.

However, having to make loan payments on the farm can be more stressful for a farming family than worrying about the weather. Six out of the 10 farmers identified for this study thought that the most challenging thing they and their spouses had to overcome was making payments on the farm. If you have a bad growing season or lose a couple of head of cattle, then your profit margin narrows and can easily end up in the red. Banks still require the payments mandated by terms of the loan agreement regardless of the season the farmer is currently experiencing. This was never more evident than with Farmer #9, “We had the one farm, we had to pay for it twice, we had to refinance when times got hard.” In order to deal with struggling to make payments, this farmer and several others had to refinance their loans to make ends meet. This in turn also delayed any expansion opportunities they might have had because it was taking them longer to pay off debts than they had originally planned.

B: Existing Resources

Wife’s continued support of the farm through her sickness. Most of the farmers interviewed for this study had wives that continued to support the farming operation even during their sickness. Their roles might have changed a little, as they might not have been able to leave the home but she still contributed to the farming operation by cooking meals, washing clothes, etc. Five out of the 10 farmers interviewed for this study said that their wives contributed to the farm right up until they just couldn’t physically handle the tasks anymore.

Having children help with the farm. One of the biggest resources discussed during this study was the availability of the farmers’ children to help out on the farm

in normal times and during their time of sickness. Nine out of the 10 farmers interviewed for this study had children that contributed to the farming operation in some way, with some even taking over as the primary manager of the operation. Farmer #6 had four sons that helped him on the farm, and one of them has assumed the manager role for the farm. The strength of the farming operation often depends on the availability of workhands to make the farm run. Having sons or daughters to help with the farm was a major factor in the farming operation for the farmers interviewed for this study. Children were available to assume the male farmer's chores while he was concentrating on taking care of his spouse.

Money from the tobacco buyout. With the tobacco buyout, there was an initial payment of money for the tobacco base poundage that was bought out with the act of legislation in 2004. That money was a major resource for farmers because it allowed them to have a lump sum of money to invest back into the farm, to put away in savings, or to pay bills on the farm or in the home. Having this resource provided a little security in the changing ways of the buyout for the farmers in this study.

C: Perception of "a"

Farming is a tough way to make a living. In nine out of the 10 interviews, the farmer talked about how difficult farming is as a profession. This revelation did not just happen overnight for these farmers; it was years of sweat and tears that brought them to that conclusion. Their perspectives on the stresses they endured on the farm were maybe the most sincere statements made during the interviews. They knew the farm caused them grief in their marriages, a stressful lifestyle that,

looking back, might have been unwarranted by themselves or their spouses. Farmer #2 talked about how hard farming today is compared to when he started. His sons cannot make enough money farming to make a living, "They can't make it. I've got a son who works in town, 55 years old, but ain't no way he can make it." Farmer #10 blamed the farm and his busy work schedule for the majority of the stresses in his marriage, "I think I'm to blame for a lot of problems we had because I stayed out till late at night and wasn't much of a companion." The revelation for these farmers that their lives were tougher because of their chosen profession is something that was hard for them to swallow once they lost their spouses. Farming families make decisions based on the farm as well as the home; the two separate entities of their lives really become one in a farming family.

X: Crisis

Death of spouse. All of the men interviewed for this study all faced the same crisis in that they all lost their wives. Even though each death was caused by different reasons, the outcomes of losing one's spouse were all consistent in this study.

aA: Stressor Pile Up

Downsizing of the operation. Half of the farmers interviewed for this study had to downsize their operations after the passing of their spouse. The reasons for this downsizing varied, but one consistent factor was the loss of their spouse triggered them to downsize. Some lost meaning in continuing full steam ahead on the farm without their partners, some hesitated because of their own sickness, and some turned the operation over to a family member. Farmer #5 had a bout with cancer after his wife passed away; he was planning on keeping his operation the

same until he just couldn't anymore. "There's a whole lot of work feedin' cattle and takin' care of 'em and they've got to be doctored and they've got to be fed. And if you can't take care of 'em, you don't need 'em." He had to downsize his farming operation to just hay production because he was not physically able to keep up with the daily chores caused by his sickness. Farmer #4 realized that he was not able to manage all of his cattle, and he stopped putting out a vegetable garden because of his wife's passing, "Had nobody to preserve, put this stuff up, can it and stuff like that. So, no garden and I don't keep near as many cattle as I did."

Turning the farm over to children. When some of the farmers dealt with their wife's sickness, their children really stepped up to the plate and helped out more on the farm. This act led to some of the children taking over the operation full time once the mother passed away, while some were already managing the farm prior to their mother's death. An example of this transition is with Farmer #8. "Just to tell you the truth, I just quit. I didn't need no help. But of course I had my son to help me take care of everything." Having that availability to turn the farm over to a son or daughter was observed to be a comfort for the farmers dealing with the loss of their spouse. Taking away some of that day-to-day stress was a blessing for several of the farmers interviewed for this study.

Farm work piling up. Due to the overwhelming change in lifestyles for these men dealing with the loss of their spouse, the added responsibilities in the home adversely affected the farm. After the passing of their spouses, most of them had not anticipated the time they would have to dedicate to the home chores previously performed by their wives and how that would cause them to be away from the farm

more and more. Farmer #9 talked about his experience with this and getting a later start to the day on the farm because of his added chores, “I get a little later start because I found out, believe it or not, what your spouse has to go through keeping the house clean and other things, jobs that she would do that I have to do now.” Some farmers interviewed did not take to the change well and let their farm tasks pile up to the point where they didn’t know what to do to get them done. Farmer #2 talked about how he hated to see his farm grow up because he couldn’t manage all the work anymore, “My farm, its going down more because I can’t keep it up. I mean barns need painting again. I can’t afford it and ain’t able neither.”

bB: Existing and New Resources

Family member to call on to help with the farm. Nine out of the 10 interviewees identified that they had some family member to call upon to help with the farming operation after the passing of their spouse. That accessibility really contributed to a comfort zone and reassurance for the farmers. Farmer #9 has a daughter that really helped him out on the farm after his spouse passed away and still does, “Everyday she calls and wants to know is there anything that needs to be done on the farm that I can help you with?”

cC: Perception of X + aA + bB

Missed teammate. Some of the farmers identified that they missed their teammates on the farm, the person with whom they shared everything and made decisions with on the farm. Farmer #5 talked about the importance of having that teammate, “We worked together. Yeah. You got to work together, and if you don’t work together, you don’t come up with nothing.”

Changing identity as a farmer. Resigning themselves to a single status and accepting those things would never be the same again on the farm. Farmer #1 identified his realization that he had no one to tell where he would be on the farm once his wife had passed away. His partner was gone, but he felt like someone should know where he was going to be because that is something they always had done together. His daughter started assuming that role once they kind of worked out there system:

She knows where I'm at 99% of the time. Just like I get done feeding here in the morning I'll just go around and just, a few minutes, so she'll know and I've got feeding done and alright. If I didn't show up, well she'd be here.

Farmer #6's farming reality changed course because he had to assume the primary caretaker of his school aged sons.

xx: Adaptation

Finding others to help on the farm. When dealing with a death in the family, everyone adapts and heals differently. The farmers interviewed for this study identified that finding others to help out on the farm allowed them to better adapt. They lost a partner on the farm when their spouses passed away, so the natural thought would be to get someone else to help on the farm. Seven out of the 10 men interviewed identified that as an adaption strategy. Having someone else help them on the farm allowed them to heal from their loss and to worry less about the farm operation.

Trying to stay busy. Crisis situations tend to make people concentrate on the crisis, so they try to keep their minds and days busy so that they do not dwell on the crisis at hand so much. The farmers interviewed for this study were no

different; almost every one of the men said that they tried to keep occupied right after the passing of their spouse. Farmer #3 related, “Well I was always a –always been a busy fellow. I’ve always had plenty to do and always tried to keep busy if I got depressed.”

Themes from Family Life Data

A: Stressor

Health issues. Every farmer interviewed for this study stated that the health of their wife was a major stressor in the home during their marriage. Seven out of the 10 farmers helped their wives battle cancer, making numerous trips to the hospitals and doctors’ offices for treatments. The battle with this deadly disease lasted for some participants as long as 10 years and took an emotional toll. Farmer #9 said that his wife, “Had stage IV colon, colorectal cancer for four years. She fought the good fight.” Along those same lines, Farmer #6 said that his wife, “Had several major surgeries, several rounds of chemo, and she just fought it a long time.” You could tell that during the interviews, the cancer their wives faced was an uphill battle that they fought together, no regrets, just the notion of what might have been had the disease not showed up on their doorstep. Dealing with the sickness in the home caused the family to try to do things differently in almost every situation observed. In some cases, that was relying on a loved one to help out in the home or for others the husband taking up the slack on the chores that the wife was not able to do anymore. All of these farmers interviewed handled this situation, but they all said the same thing at one point in time, “Hold on to them as long as you can, because when there gone you miss them.”

Monetary problems. The lack of money or a regular cash flow can be very stressful for anyone, but especially for farming families because of the added bills associated with the farm. However, feeling a sense of security in the home is very important for a family. Six out of 10 farmers interviewed thought that money problems were a major issue in the home for them and their wives. Some mentioned it was tough starting out when they were first married trying to pay for things, and some mentioned that it was tough on them throughout the marriage trying to afford items in the home. In one instance, Farmer #5 said that they would have done more if they would have had it but they did what they could with what they had. "We always aimed to keep everything going. What we could afford. Do what we could, and could have probably done more if we could afford it but ... we always stayed with what we could take care of."

B: Existing Resources

Family members ability to help. In almost every interview, the farmers identified that having family members available to come in and help out in the home during their time of sickness really helped them get through the process. Sons, daughters, sister-in-laws, and grandchildren were all mentioned in the interviews as being resources during a time of struggle.

Wife's off-farm work. Six of the farmers interviewed stated that their wives worked at a full-time off-farm job during their marriage and that the funds she generated really helped out with the home. Farmer #2 said that his wife's nursing income was, "Really, real important. She always kept the groceries on the table and kept me in clothes." Most of the farmers interviewed for this study said that the

money they generated from the farm usually went back into the farm and having that extra support from their wives income was a blessing for the family.

C: Perception of “a”

Wife did everything in the home. In eight of the 10 interviews, the farmers identified that their wives took care of everything in the home, and the other two only helped out minimally in the home. The women took care of everything from the laundry, dishes, cooking, house cleaning, mowing the yard, growing a vegetable garden, putting out flowers, caring for the children, financial paperwork, etc. When talking about what his wife did in the home, Farmer #9 said that, “She done it all.” When asked if his wife took care of everything in the home Farmer #1 said, “Oh yeah!” Similarly Farmer #5 said the same thing, “Yeah. Yeah. She done all that.” Having their wife there to take care of everything in the home allowed the men to farm and work worry free.

Battle with sickness didn’t stop their lives. In almost every participant’s situation, he realized that his wife’s sickness was going to take her from him, but he just didn’t want to accept it. Farmer #2 knew that his wife’s battle with cancer would ultimately lead to her passing, but he did not want to accept it until it happened. Farmer #7 said that his wife always took care of him, and even through her sickness, still took the best care of him that she could. Farmer #5 thought that he took the best care of his wife that he could and also thought that the doctors caring for her did as well. Even through all of their health issues, they still believed that their lives were on track and took care of each other until they couldn’t anymore.

X: Crisis

Death of spouse. All of the men interviewed for this study faced the same crisis in that they all lost their wives.

aA: Stressor Pile Up

Had to start doing everything the wife had done. The men who participated in this study all confirmed that since their wives took care of everything in the home, after they passed away, someone had to start doing those tasks. Some of the farmers learned how to do the chores in the home, some already knew how to do some of them, and other farmers had to rely on help accomplishing these tasks. Family maintenance tasks were challenging for eight out of the 10 farmers in this study. Farmer #1 had to start doing his own laundry, "I do my own laundry which, you know, she done that." Farmer #2 said that folding his clothes was the biggest perceived adjustment, "The worst thing to hit me is the folding of my clothes, my shirts especially." Farmer #9 talked about how that he now had to do the paperwork in the home and how challenging that task was for him, "The major thing that was, that I had never done was the paperwork, and the income taxes and the tax bills." Farmer #5 had to learn to do the dishes, cook a little but doesn't want to learn how to do his own laundry so his daughter helps him with that. "My daughter has to come down now and pick my washing up, take it, come back next week and bring one, and take one with her. It makes a lot of difference." Farmer #6 thought that laundry and meals were his most challenging new tasks to learn. Cooking good meals is something that Farmer #4 identified as being what he struggled with the most. "Well the food. That's because I had the best of eats when she was alive." Farmer #7 also concurred that cooking was his biggest challenge, "Cooking and

reading recipes.” The main thing to understand in this situation is that these men were already dealing with the loss of their spouses plus learning new tasks in the home they had never done before in their marriage. Compounding the challenges experienced by these men during a difficult time of transition.

bB: Existing and New Resources

Family support. Every farmer interviewed for this study identified that family members being accessible after the passing of their spouse was one of the biggest resources they had initially and continue to rely upon. Having that net to support you in the home was really important to the farmers because it meant that they didn’t have to tackle everything alone. An example of that is Farmer #5 whose daughter does his laundry and Farmer #7’s niece who comes in and helps him clean his home regularly. Farmer #3’s mother moved in with him and his children to help assume some of the motherly duties and help out with the kids. No matter what the situation, having that family support was very crucial for the progression of these widowers’ healing.

Church family. Having an additional extended family in the churches that the participants attended was another huge help after losing their spouses. Nine out of the 10 participants identified the church as a source of healing and help after their loss. The one farmer who didn’t attend church regularly still had church pastors and members visit him, providing him with support. Farmer #9 thanked his wife for taking him to church when they first got married, “I would say we were super-active in the church. As a matter of fact, she got me started 32 years ago when we got married I attended her church.” It was observed in this study that the

participants who attended church regularly had a smoother transition and shorter mourning period than the farmers who did not attend regularly.

cC: Perception of x + aA + bB

Family members belong in their own homes. Four of the 10 participants in the study thought that their family belonged in their own homes and they needed to leave the widowers alone and let them deal with the loss in their own way. Farmer #1 wanted his daughter to lead her own life and not worry about him so much, “I didn’t want her to have responsibility to come in here. I wanted to her to live her life with her home and stuff.” Farmer #8 talked about how he needed to deal with the loss himself and people needed to leave him alone, “Too damn much attention. I finally told them, got to leave me alone. Let me work this out myself.” Now, he knew that they were only trying to help but he wanted them to know that he was okay and he needed to deal with his grief himself.

Lonesome life. Several of the farmers identified that it was just a lonely life after the passing of their spouse, and they did not see it getting much better. Since eight out of the 10 participants in this study did not have any children in the home when their spouses passed away, they essentially lived alone after they lost the spouse. Farmer #2 didn’t think the loneliness would ever get any better, “I mean it’s just for me, it’s just a lonesome life and they say it’ll get better. As of yet, it hasn’t got no better.” Farmer #10 thought that it was more lonely at night than any other time, “Loneliness at night probably because I’m there by myself.” Either way, all of the participants in this study felt the loneliness of losing their spouse at some point.

xx: Adaptation

Doing what works. Everyone adjusts to death and copes in different ways, but doing what works for you is the most important thing to focus upon. For instance, Farmer #2 has learned to cope with his loneliness by relying on his Australian shepherd dog, who he called his “Buddy.” Farmer #1 took solace in the fact that his long life and good health was because he took such good care of his wife during her years of sickness. Farmer #8 knew that he and his wife had the perfect life, and he doesn’t know how he could have had it any better; missing her is to be expected. Farmer #3 continued to stay busy after his spouse passed and still continues to keep his time occupied as a coping strategy. Farmer #9 has adapted to his new lifestyle by teaching his grandson about his farming operation, calling him his Godsend in the interview. Farmer #6 was proud of his sons and that they all four have Master’s degrees and that the loss of their mother/wife has drawn them closer. No matter the situation, adapting varied from participant to participant, but the common theme was that you just have to do what works for you. Missing your spouse is inevitable how you deal with that is an indication of whether you have adapted or not.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Perspective must be given to the findings of this study by comparing the themes emerging from the farm widowers interviewed with previous research on bereaved men and farm widows (see Appendix 6 for a complete listing of themes.) As discussed in the Literature Review section, there have been studies dealing with

bereaved male's coping strategies; none, however, could be identified that focused on how the male farmers adapted after losing their spouse. This section compares current findings with widowers as well as farming widowers and offers insights as to how these farm widowers coped with the loss of their spouse.

Farm Widowers in Comparison to Widowers

Similarly to Martin and Doka (2000), one of the themes that emerged was that to cope with the loss of their spouse the farmers tried to stay as busy as they could to keep their minds off of the death. Their findings identified alcohol and play as common ways their participants kept busy. However, in the present study farmers indicated they kept busy by investing their energies in working on the farm. Farmers were not specifically asked about alcohol consumption, but none mentioned it as a coping strategy.

One other common theme in this study was that the male farmers did not want family members to concentrate their lives around the widower because they wanted them to live their own lives. Martin and Doka (2000) found that men are much more difficult to comfort after the loss of a spouse, which became evident in the interviews for this study. The farm widowers knew family members were there for help, but also wanted to deal with the issue on their own and not be coddled.

Chen et al. (1999) found that men are more likely to experience higher anxiety disorders and report suicidal thoughts after the loss of a spouse than when compared to non-widowed married men. However, this study only had one participant out of 10 state that he was currently dealing with high anxiety and was seeking professional help in the form of medication. None of the men in this study

reported any sign of being suicidal or talked about desiring their own death in any way. This could be related to the nature of the sample since these men were willing to volunteer to discuss the loss of their spouse and are probably coping with their loss in a healthier manner.

Dealing with health problems, both their own and their spouse's chronic illnesses, was common for the participants in this study. Fitzpatrick et al. (2001) reported that the first 6 to 12 months after the passing of their spouse widowers had an increase in health and mortality rates, but that chance goes down considerably after the first year. This study showed no real decline of the widower's health after the passing of their spouse; in fact, one mentioned finally putting a priority on his own health after having focused time and energy on caring for his ailing wife. The interviewees experienced normal health problems before, during, and after the passing of their spouse, but none mentioned conditions brought on by the passing of their spouse.

Almost every participant in this study, when asked about when they got out of the mourning period stated that they, "hadn't and wouldn't never be out of it." Similarly Brown et al. (2008) found that widowers could experience depressive symptoms for three years and beyond. The participants in this study, some of them having been without their wives for 10 years or more, still were experiencing some of the grieving feelings they had from day one. This intense bereavement affected them on the farm and in the home.

It became very evident from the participants' responses that losing their wives was the hardest thing they had to get through, but the second hardest was

dealing with the added household chores they inherited when their spouse passed away. Bennett (1993) found that men have to find ways to take care of the domestic work in their homes, by doing it themselves or having someone else do it. Either way, it is considered women's work to the men. This study echoes that farming widowers really struggle with the housework their partner always provided to the home. In one instance, the widower had school-age children in the home and had to assume the primary caretaker role for the children, home, and farm.

Farm Widowers in Comparison to Farm Widows

Upon the passing of a spouse on the farm, whether that makes the surviving spouse a widower or widow, the decisions impacting the farm operation and family life are challenging. This section examines similarities and differences between how the farming widowers dealt with the loss of their spouse and how the farming widows in the Scheere and Brandt (2001) study coped with eight areas of concern on the farm. Again, since no previous research on farm widowers coping and adapting could be identified, comparing the emerging themes to previous research with farm widows can provide insight on gender similarities and differences.

The first area of concern for the farm widow was economics and decision-making. Most of the women interviewed had to start managing the farming operation from an economic and day-to-day managerial position on the farm. The widowers in this study did not have to worry about that aspect of the farming operation because they were already doing that before they lost their spouse. But as noted in the previous section, they did have to assume household chores that had been the primary responsibility of their wives.

Stress was also a major area of concern for the widows after they lost their husbands, stress of having to deal with the loss of their spouses, and from the new tasks of managing the operation. The widowers in this study did not really attribute any stress from the actual managing of the farm after the loss of their spouse. A couple of widowers expressed stress that they had trouble with the bookkeeping aspect of the operation once their spouses had passed, since their wives were the primary bookkeeper for the home and the farm.

Maintaining the farm was the third area that widows identified as being an area that needed addressing after the passing of their spouse. The wives wanted to keep the farming operation a form of honoring their late spouses, because that is what they thought that they would have wanted. The widowers in the present study, however, wanted to keep the farming operation going because of a desire to stay busy. In a sense, they needed the farm to help them through their time of mourning and for income purposes. However, some of the widowers did express that their farms were too much to handle now that they were getting older, and they had to let them run down a little more than usual.

The fourth area of coping the widowers addressed was the difficulty of dealing with reminders of the deceased. When you are a farmer, everything you do is in a sense your work, so when that person is gone everything you touch or do on the farm could have some meaning for the family members left alive. The widowers in this study for the most part did not relate to the farm in the same way, causing them to have reminders of their late wives; rather, the challenge was the reminders prompted by things in the home. Just about every farmer interviewed said that their

wives took care of the home, so naturally when the wife is gone, everything they had done to the home would be a natural reminder for the widower.

The farm widows noted the importance of having comforts and support from family, friends, churches, etc. by Scheerer and Brandt (2001). Appropriate help received after the loss of a spouse is a key factor in the healing process for anyone. The widows particularly needed the extra support to help manage the farm and appreciated the care and concern expressed by their support system. In the present study, farm widowers mentioned the important role family and neighbors and to a lesser extent the broader the farming community had in keeping their operation running, particularly in the initial time frame after their wife's passing. However, the farmers seemed less inviting of family members, focusing efforts on their personal life, but they did appreciate support to do things within the home.

Coping was the last area that was listed as an important area that the widows needed to address after the loss of a spouse. There were several activities listed as ways women could cope or just to simply stay busy and not concentrate on the predicament. Likewise widowers in this study identified several coping strategies they used in response to stressors on their farm operation and family life (Appendix 6). However, the major theme in the end was to "just do what works." As mentioned before, everyone copes differently depending on the situation and person involved, but doing what works for the person going through the bereavement is very important for the coping process.

Unexpected Findings

As with any study, previous research and the researcher's own experiences provide a foundation for what one generally expects to glean from the interviewees. However, there are often unexpected findings that add particular insight to the challenge being investigated.

The first thing that was unexpected was that almost every farmer talked about how hard farming was as a profession. The widowers expressed their discontent with farming in an almost guilty tone, guilt from putting themselves and their late wives through a rougher life than they should have in their lifetime. What makes this interesting is that there was no question asked of the men that provided whether if farming was easy or hard. The farmers offered their opinion of farming in general on their own. If farming was so difficult, why didn't they get out of the profession? Coping with financial difficulties on the farm was mentioned in nearly every interview. It was almost as if they were sick of having to even deal with the farm at times. Farming is an unforgiving beast that will forever be linked to Mother Nature. The participants in this study expressed that they were just tired, tired of making those payments, tired of not having the funds to make that farm payment, just plain old tired.

Another unexpected finding was that most participants in this study, when asked how long it took them to get out of the initial bereavement period, talked about how they were still in it, and always would be. Now, presumably this might not be alarming for someone who lost their wife five years or less, but what was interesting to the researcher was that some of the farmers who had lost their wives

over five years ago said that they were still mourning their wife's passing. One farmer, who had been without his wife for over 10 years, became teary-eyed when he started talking about his late wife and said that he was still mourning her. The grieving widower is not what is so interesting here but that the farmers continued to mourn the loss for years after the loss, further cementing earlier statements that a farming relationship is very intimate and unique in the fact that it is an everyday grind for the man and woman. When one is taken away, there is a hole that obviously will never be filled.

Another interesting finding that must be considered is that the widowers wanted their families to live their lives and not worry about them so much. Having the ability to declare they were alright after the loss of their spouse was unselfishly admirable in many participants interviewed. It also shows that males want to be independent in the sense that they are handling things on their own. Rather than just dismiss this as an act of masculinity, the researcher observed that the men were genuinely caring for their family members wanting them to live their own lives. "Don't concentrate on me; I will be fine."

One last unexpected finding was that from an observational perspective, it appeared that these widowers were resigning themselves to a life of loneliness. Loneliness in the manner that it was as if they chose to be that way; they had had the best, so why would they need anything else? Some of them believed that no one could help them—no medicines, no doctors, no family members, nothing. It was just the way that things were, and they believed that it was okay; they might not have understood fully why it happened but they just had to deal with it.

Chapter 8: Recommendations and Conclusions

This study looked at farming widowers dealing with the loss of their late wives. The results of this study have been delivered by looking at the common themes of the participants through the lens of the Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis. In this section, we will be suggesting further considerations for researchers pursuing studies for farm widowers and identifying how the Cooperative Extension Service can use these findings to help other male farmers who lose their wives in the future.

Recommendations to Researchers

The findings of this study provide insights into the world of farming widowers. This initial research demonstrates that the husband of a farming couple negotiates the post-crisis period in a somewhat different manner than previous research on farm widows indicates. Doing a joint comparison would outline the differences and give some base for what can be done to help both in the future. Further research comparing farming couples where the husband and wife are co-farmers to other couples who are equal partners in a family-owned business would give information as to how the farm life differs from other occupations. Also, including a sub-sample of farm widowers into other studies of bereaved men would provide insight as to the similarities and differences of these agrarian men.

A longitudinal study that follows a selection of men through several years of their bereavement would give a better overview of what the widower goes through at different stages of grieving over a longer period of time. This study only met with participants one time, but if the researcher were to meet with them several times

over a longer period, it would build rapport and also allow widowers opportunities to share their thoughts with the researchers.

Limitations of the Study

Future researchers will want to note the limitations of this qualitative study. One of the main challenges to this study was that this is a very difficult population to reach for any kind of research, let alone this one that deals with the emotions of losing a spouse. These men have been dealing with the hardest thing they have ever had to deal with in their lives, and to try and get them to talk about that is a tough hill to climb. Without the assistance of the Cooperative Extension Service ANR Agents, there would have been fewer than 10 participants in this study. With this being a hard-to-reach audience, it brings up the point that only the men who were willing to talk about their situation of losing a spouse volunteered. Likely, the men having a much harder time coping did not volunteer for the study. The logical question is would those men that did not want to volunteer have made the results of the study much different?

Another limitation would be that due to a lack of finding sources, this study only concentrated on Kentucky farming widowers. Every state has farmers with a variety of farming operations, and inputs from these varying perspectives would provide additional insight.

Recommendations to Cooperative Extension Service

One of the goals of this research study was to learn from farm widowers what the Cooperative Extension Service could do to assist the men. The findings from this study help us understand how to better coordinate with other resources in

the bereaved farmers' community. Most of the participants in this study mentioned that they would have really liked to have received some information that pertained just to them as farmers after the loss of their spouse. Extension can play a major role in this dissemination of information because of their local and personal presence in each county in Kentucky. The close connection to the farming community and ongoing interaction with the farmers uniquely positions ANR, FCS, and 4-HYD agents to know when/who/where the farmer has lost their spouse. The optimum timing of the dispersal of information could not be nailed down from this study, but speculatively, the researcher concluded that any time after two weeks up to six months would be an appropriate time to deliver information to the bereaved. This would be past the funeral period and when the widower is beginning to cope with changes in the household and farming operation.

The audience should not only be the farmer who has lost his spouse, but also to the family and friends providing support. With so many changes staring them in the face, various widowers might benefit from receiving the information from a family member, neighbor, or agricultural professional.

The information could be delivered in the manner of a factsheet, or letter addressing the issue at hand with the farmer and encouraging him to try things that might help him through the process. Appropriate topics to cover include easy cooking for one, laundry tips, bookkeeping strategies, household cleaning guide, etc.

This study further emphasizes the important information dissemination role the Cooperative Extension Service can provide to citizens in general and farmers in particular. Dealing with the grieving population in any area is a tough task due to

the sensitive status the bereaved are usually in when they need the most help.

There must be rapport built with the client in jeopardy, and they must be open to receive the information and be willing to look at it in order to benefit from the assistance.

Trainings for the ANR Agents would help to instruct them on proper delivery methods for a farmer dealing with a loss of spouse, when to give the material, how it should be delivered, and that it is okay to give the information. The ANR Agents should also be aware of the widowers in their communities and incorporate them into their programs, ask them to come help grill for a meal, attend a production course, go on farm tour, or visit with their Extension offices—anything that gets the farmer out of the home and his mind off of the situation at hand. Widowers should also be encouraged to participate in statewide programs such as Farm Bureau or Conservation.

One idea that has been identified by the participants in this study is the need to have something on hand that prepares these men particularly if the wife is terminally ill. Nine out of the 10 farmers in this study dealt with their wife's sickness before her passing, and they admitted to thinking they knew what was coming down the line once their spouses passed away. Yet, they owned up to not having any clue what to expect once it actually happened. Having something in hand that would prepare them for some of the changes they are going to encounter might help to ease some of the stress on the widower once they are alone. Will this help all? These strategies will not help all, but they might help someone searching for aid during their time of crisis.

What Farmers Could Use

The farmers in this study and future male farming widowers who might face the same tragedy of losing their spouse could use materials generated from this study.

One of the main things that might be helpful for these men would be to have materials on farm succession planning for their family members and themselves. Farm succession plans are usually put into place within the farming family to let everyone know what will be taking place on the farm once the primary owners retire or pass away. Most of the men in this study had wills in effect when their wife passed away, though a couple of participants had not prepared any formal documents. Even if they had a will, they had not talked about any kind of farm succession plan. It is evident from this study and previous research that having a good farm succession plan could help minimize the post-crisis stress of losing a spouse. The plan would also help family members anticipate what is going to happen to the farm once their parents, grandparents, etc. pass away.

Another important topic to include in any document to a farmer would be the decision whether to downsize their operation post spousal loss. Several of the farmers studied stated that they had not planned on downsizing their operation at the time of their wife's passing but eventually had to because of various reasons ranging from their own health problems to not needing as much money to live on. Handing over the farm or slowing down in a profession that you have always been at maximum capacity can be hard for anyone to do and accept. Providing a

document that teaches the time and age most beneficial for downsizing after the passing of their spouse would be very helpful to a farming widower.

An additional area identified as a need for farming widowers was assistance with bookkeeping for the home and farm. The men in this study either did all the bookkeeping for the home and farm or their spouses were responsible for both sets of books. This left a steep cliff for some of them to fall from once their spouses passed away, particularly if they had never done any of the bookkeeping. Obviously, the men who ones that had been doing the books did not have any problem taking care of their finances once they were widowers. The bookkeeping help would need to be targeted to farmers who face such a steep learning curve when it comes to bills and bookkeeping. In one interview, a farmer identified that he would come home from working all day on the farm, empty his pockets of bills, receipts, and check stubs that he had accrued during that day of operation and his wife would take care of it all. Once his wife passed away, he was faced with doing that himself. This new added chore detracted from his daily farming time. The stress of learning the books only added to his challenge of coping.

The major area that anyone has to deal with when losing a spouse is confronting the grief associated with the loss. How one deals with that grief varies from person to person. Activities to help one cope with loss would be a great suggestion sheet idea for anyone going through this process to receive. There has been previous work done in this area, so directing individuals to these activities should be a priority. For farmers who are computer literate, references to online resources such as those produced by the University of Kentucky Cooperative

Extension Service could be highlighted. However, since most of the photos used on the website depict grieving women, the inclusion of male images both on the website and printed materials would likely resonate better with the men receiving the information.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to gain insight into the lives of widowed farmers with a particular focus on transitions within the farming operation and family life. Through their stories, we learned what happened before the loss of the spouse on the farm and in the home, during the bereavement period and how they handled the situation after the bereavement period had ended. The findings as discussed in previous sections were noteworthy in that they depict what a farming widower goes through during the loss of his spouse. It is not without justification that these findings can be used to update older publications on grieving and/or incorporated into new materials to better assist these farming widowers in the future.

Another goal of this study was to assess how the Cooperative Extension Service can be a resource for the farming widower after the loss of his spouse. Clearly, there is a role the Cooperative Extension Service can play in supporting = widowed farmers in the most difficult time of transition as they seek a new normal for their farm operation and family life.

Through the stories of the farming males identified for this study, we learned that some of the truest love stories do not have to be in a book or in a movie. True love stories depict people getting through life together the best they can, sweating

together, crying together, sharing together, facing that next hurdle together, and laying their head down each night proud of the passing day. The farming man is generally viewed in society as stoic, hard, tough, dedicated, and brass, yet rarely considered as being sensitive, loving, cognizant, protective, or charming. Maybe above everything that was discussed in this project, the point that gets hidden in the words, in the statements of these resilient men is love. Not the love for their life, or their wife's life, or their children's life or their farming life but simply the love of life and how they chose to live it, life that has been altered by the passing of their spouse but never forgotten.

Appendix A

Research Study Announcement

“Male Farmers Coping with Loss of Spouse: Impacts on Farming Operation and Family Life”

This is a notice for anyone who meets the criteria listed below and who would like to participate in this research study.

Criteria:

Are you a full time Kentucky male farmer who has lost a spouse at least one year ago? Are you over the age of 50 and married to your late spouse for more than 25 year's?

If so, we would like to have your input on a research study that involves farmers such as yourself who have lost a spouse.

This research involves a sit down interview with the principal investigator Daniel Wilson who will discuss your experiences before, during and after the loss of your spouse. The interview will range from one to two hours. Your responses will be used to gain an understanding of how farmers cope with the changes in their farming operation and family life after the loss of their spouse.

About the Researcher

Daniel Wilson is the person who will be doing the research with you on this study. Daniel is a County Agricultural Agent in Wolfe County, KY. He is finishing up his Graduate Degree at the University of Kentucky and for his thesis he is conducting this research study. Daniel's full time farming grandfather recently lost his wife of over 50 years. He has seen how his grandfather struggled with the loss of his wife and now Daniel wants to give future farmers who lose a spouse some form of help with the results of this study.

How to Participate:

If you are interested in participating in this research study you need to contact Daniel Wilson at 606-362-7516 or at daniel.wilson@uky.edu or at PO BOX 704, Campton, KY 41301 to express your willingness to participate in this research study.

Appendix B

Email to the Agricultural and Natural Resource Extension Agents

Subject: Need Your Help Recruiting Farmers

Dear ANR Agent:

This email is to let you know of my research study to complete my Graduate Degree at the University of Kentucky.

The study that I am conducting will be looking at Male Farmers who have lost a spouse. I want to find out how the loss of the spouse changes the day-to-day activities of the farming operation and the family life of the farmer. The goal of this study is to get the male farmer help after the loss of their spouse.

The study population will be any full time Kentucky male farmer that has lost a female spouse beyond a period of one year. The age of the male farmer is specified as 50 years old or they must have been married to their late spouse for more than 25 years.

I am attaching a flyer to this email that explains the research study. I am asking you to post this flyer in your offices and pass along this flyer to any farmer whom you think might fit the criteria. The flyer explains what the farmer must do in order to participate in the study. To protect the privacy of these individuals they must contact me directly about participating in this study and it must not come from you. I am simply asking you to pass along/display the flyer for the study.

This is a personal subject for these farmers and the recruitment and interviewing of them for this study is very important. I am willing to travel all over the state in order to gain insights from our male farmers who have lost their spouse.

I know we are all busy so let me be the first to thank you for helping with this research project.

Cordially,

Daniel Wilson

606-362-7516

Appendix C

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Male Farmers Coping with Loss of Spouse: Impacts on Farming Operation and Family Life

You are being invited to take part in Male Farmers Coping with Loss of Spouse: Impacts on Farming Operation and Family Life, a research study about farmers losing their spouse. You are eligible to take part in this study because you are a full time male farmer who has lost a spouse over one year ago and were married to that spouse for over 25 years. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 10-15 people to do so in the state of Kentucky.

The person in charge of this study is Daniel Wilson of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Patricia Dyk.

By doing this study, we hope to learn what a typical male farmer experiences when he loses his spouse. What effects does the loss have on the farming operation and family life? We hope to gain valuable insights on how to help male farmers in the future with the loss of their spouse. We will provide you with the results and any publications created from the study.

The questions will cause you to think about your deceased spouse. If you are not ready or willing to talk about the subject then you should not participate in this study.

The research interview will be conducted at a location that is near you such as the local Extension Service or at your farm or other convenient location. You will need to be available for this study at least once and that visit will take about one to two hours. Your responses will be tape-recorded.

During the interview you will be asked questions about your farming operation before and after the loss of your spouse. You will also be asked about your family life before and after the loss of your spouse. Your responses will not be tied to your name, however if you choose to share the information that you provided for this study to anyone after the interview that is up to you. You may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings. Just ask the principal investigator about these resources at any time during the interview.

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in this study. I am not in a position to pay for your participation but hope you will be willing to share your experiences and insights to help other farmers who face the same challenges.

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. All documents taken from this study will be kept in a locked safe at the researchers home for a period of five years and then they will be destroyed.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. In order to conclude the results of this study for any kind of fact sheet or publication your responses might be used for these purposes. However, your identity will remain anonymous. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

The person in charge of this study is Daniel Wilson of the University of Kentucky Department of Community and Leadership Development. Before, during or after this study, if you have questions you may contact the project manager, Daniel Wilson at 606-362-7516 or daniel.wilson@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. Two copies of this consent form have been provided one for us and one for you to keep.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date

Appendix D

Questions asked to Participants

1. Let's start talking about your farming operation. How many years have you been a farmer?
2. Tell me about your operation. How has it changed over the years?
3. How many years were you married?
4. How many children do you have? If any? Dependents or Adults?
5. What was your farming operation like at the beginning of your marriage compared to the operation now?
6. Do any of your children show interest in taking on the family farm in the future? Or have they already started farming the farm?
7. Briefly describe your marriage.
8. How did your wife help you on the farm? Or did she?
9. Did your wife have a job? How important was that income?
10. Who took care of the financial paperwork in the relationship?
11. Were there traditional roles in the marriage? I.e. The wife cooked, cleaned the house, and took care of the children.
12. How many years has it been since the passing of your spouse?
13. Had you ever talked about what you would do with the farm if either of you passed away? Wills? Business Planning? Farm Succession?
14. What were some of the challenging things that you and your spouse had to overcome throughout your marriage?
15. Were some of these same challenging times different after your wife passed away?
16. Upon the death of your spouse was it sudden or was there speculation of death through sickness leading up to the death?

17. Who took care of the farming operation during the funeral period? You? Family Member? Neighbor?
18. Did you know what changes were in store for you at the time of the passing of your spouse?
19. What changes did you have to make in your daily farming operation upon the passing of your spouse?
20. Were these changes something you did not expect or were you expecting them?
21. How was your operation impacted during the first year after the loss of your spouse?
22. Did you take a financial hit after the passing of your spouse?
23. If so, who did you turn to for financial advice?
24. What were some changes that happened within your family/home upon the passing of your spouse?
25. What are some things that you had to take over and start doing that your spouse always did? I.e. things in the house, garden, mowing the yard, etc.
26. Were these new tasks challenging for you? If so, what was the most challenging?
27. How was the initial grieving process for you upon the immediate death of your spouse?
28. How long did it take before you felt like you were getting out of the initial mourning period?
29. Who helped get you through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?
30. What if anything helped get you through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?
31. What did not help you get through/cope with the initial mourning period upon the loss of your spouse?
32. Who provided you with the most support during the loss of your spouse? Were there any specific individuals or groups?

33. What would have helped you in the initial mourning period to get through the loss of your spouse? If anything?
34. What was the role of the farming community as you were coping with the passing of your wife?
35. Have you remarried? If so, how many years after the passing of your spouse did you remarry?
36. If resources were available to help you as a farmer with your spousal loss would you have liked to have received some? If yes, what would have been helpful? Ie. Factsheet, letter, publication. Who should it come from? Ie. Extension Agents, Family members, church pastors?
37. If you could pinpoint one thing that is the most different about your farming operation after the loss of your spouse what would it be?
38. If you could pinpoint one thing that is the most different about your family life after the loss of your spouse what would it be?
39. Is there anything else that you would like to share about the loss of your spouse?
40. Any advice for other farmers? My grandfather recently lost his spouse what advice would you give him?

Appendix E

Interpreting Farm Widowers' Interviews through Double ABCX Model

Farmer #1

Farming Operation

- a- Stressor
 - Tobacco Buyout-had to increase cattle production to offset
 - Diabetes decreased wife's ability to be the co-farmer
- b-Existing Resources
 - Money from tobacco buyout to continue operation
 - Daughter able to come in and help provide care in the home to keep the operation going
 - Wife continuing to provide help from the home on the farm
- c-Perception of "a"
 - Tobacco buyout was welcomed but brought about change
 - Diabetes caused the farmer to take up most of the slack in the operation
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Loss of his son
 - He had to invite people onto the farm to help him do the things she always did
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Other family and neighbors were a resource he could call on
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He didn't have anyone to tell where he was at during the day
 - He no longer had his gatekeeper, story he told
- xX-Adaptation
 - Found others to help him out but just was not the same

Family Life

- a- Stressor
 - Hip replacement surgery delayed because he wanted to help her during her sickness
 - Loss of the grandson
- b-Existing Resources
 - Her fight to live a normal life even after loss of her leg
 - Daughter coming in to help with the home
- c-Perception of "a"

- Loss of grandson was devastating and thought initially they couldn't handle it but had to they realized
 - Delaying his surgery to care for her
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Misses the grandchildren being around and having the television on all night, he was left with the empty house
- cC-Perception of x + aA + bB
 - Family members belonged in their own homes because he wanted them to live their own lives
- xX-Adaptation
 - He felt like that his caring for his wife so well during her sickness has contributed to his longevity and getting over her loss
 - Daughter helping him to adapt

Farmer #2

Farming Operation (Production Side)

- a-Stressor
 - Making payments on the farm, land, equipment, cattle
 - Transitioning from a Dairy to Beef cattle herd
 - Wife's sickness forced him to be in the home more and forced him to hire the farm work done
- b-Existing Resources
 - Built barns in his spare time to help pay the farming bills
 - Family farm being available for purchase without auction
 - Wife took care of the home so that he could farm
- c-Perception of "a"
 - Very hard to make it as a farmer he thought and no way to make it in today's time, caused he and his spouse trouble dealing with paying for the farm
- x-Crisis
 - Death of Spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Arm surgery made him slow up on the farm and stop production in areas he never thought he would
 - Farm work piling up because he is not able to do the work, barns need painting, fencerows cleaned, etc.
- bB-Existing and New Resources

- Australian Shepherd dog, companion and helps him with the cows on the farm, said he was his buddy
 - Son who helped out on the farm more now that his wife had passed
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - Since he has downsized he has realized that things like insurances on all barns and the farm are no longer possible due to the decrease in income.
- xX-Adaptation
 - Continued to pull his draft horses as a form of entertainment and coping

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - He had been divorced and so had she
 - Nine surgeries for her cancer battle
 - Quitting her job as a nurse because of her sickness- loss of her income and something she loved very much
- b-Existing Resources
 - Daughter came in and helped during the sickness in the home
 - Good insurance from her work as a nurse
- c-Perception of “a”
 - Knew that her sickness was going to take her from him but didn’t want to accept it
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do the things she always did, laundry, cooking, make his bed, washes dishes, run the sweeper once a week
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Could already cook, he made pies when he was younger to sell and still does that today
 - His church family helping him with visits and calls
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - It’s a lonesome life and as of yet hasn’t gotten any better
- xX-Adaptation
 - Daughter and sons call him once a day to check on him
 - His Australian Shepherd dog who is his buddy

Farmer #3

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor

- His battle with Hepatitis that kept him from farming for one year
 - His struggle in keeping up with multiple jobs
 - Her battle with cancer
- b-Existing Resources
 - Wife assumed the primary manager of the farm during his sickness
 - Wife continued working on the farm and in the home during her sickness
- c-Perception of “a”
 - Wife could do anything that he could do on the farm and was the biggest help he had on it, did everything together
 - Her sickness forced Farmer #3 to take up the slack on the farm
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - The depression from losing his spouse caused him to keep several jobs to keep his mind busy and he didn’t slow down a bit after her passing
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - His mother had to come in and assume some of the duties of his spouse on the farm and in the home
- cC-Perception of x + aA + bB
 - If it hadn’t of been for his mother helping out he never would have made it
- xX-Adaptation
 - Found solace in his children, mother and church family helping him cope on the farm

Family Life

- a- Stressor
 - Sick for over 10 years with cancer
 - Purchasing of cabinet business, put a financial strain on them
- b-Existing Resources
 - His mother coming in to help in the home during the sickness
 - Her fight to live a normal life during her sickness
- c-Perception of “a”
 - Knew her death was coming but didn’t want to accept it
 - She wanted to always be upgrading their businesses and pushed them to do more and was fine with being financially burdened at times
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Had to start doing things in the home she always did, cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc.
- bB-Existing and New Resources

- Her making them go to church at the beginning of their marriage and during their marriage allowed him to have a solace in his church family after her passing
 - They done everything together and his wife took comfort in the fact that she knew he would be okay after she was gone and it helped him with his new chores
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - Our kids were still home and I had to go on for them
- xX-Adaptation

Farmer #4

Farming Operation

- a- Stressor
 - Tobacco Buyout-had to increase cattle production to offset
 - His heart problems and his wife's heart problems
 - The sons dislike for farm work
- b-Existing Resources
 - Money from tobacco buyout to continue operation
 - Wife always took care of the home and always helped out on the farm, she was a worker
- c-Perception of "a"
 - Tobacco buyout was welcome but brought about change
 - They always worked together on the farm, sometimes he would give her the worst jobs because she liked to work
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - No vegetable garden anymore
 - Downsizing his operation so that there were not as many cattle to feed since he lost his spouse
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Son was there to help out on the farm and provide some of the manual labor that was missing after the passing
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - Getting older and didn't need the money so he downsized
 - She always took care of the vegetable garden and he has no interest in growing one
- xX-Adaptation

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - Heart sickness for both of them
 - Money troubles early on before she started teaching school
- b-Existing Resources
 - Son to help out
 - Financially stable enough to manage without her funds
- c-Perception of “a”
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Had to start doing things his wife always did in the home
 - Trouble keeping up with everything in the home
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Son to help out
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - Bad lonesome life
- xX-Adaptation

Farmer #5

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - Tobacco Buyout-had to increase cattle production to offset
 - His age and body couldn't keep up with the farm so he had to downsize and start working in the local grocery store to supplement his income
- b-Existing Resources
 - Wife worked at a factory job at the beginning of the marriage but quit to help run the farm
- c-Perception of “a”
 - When you start getting up in years your body just cant take the physical abuse that is required to be a full time farmer
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Cancer in his arm that limited his ability to work it and the farm
 - Had to sell his cattle because of his health, age and loss of his spouse
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Local farmers chips in and chipped in to help him when he needed it
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - Missed his teammate, he talked several times about a man and wife being a team and he missed that the most
- xX-Adaptation

- Downsized and found others to help him on the farm

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - Lack of income at times was a struggle for them, would have done more if they would have had the money
 - Her sickness and a 100 day stay in the hospital before she passed away
- b-Existing Resources
 - His Daughter and his Sister in Law chipped in and helped in the home
 - His desire to provide for her and took her back and forth to the doctor/hospital
- c-Perception of “a”
 - They had one bank account, if he needed money it was there, if she needed it, it was there.
 - He took care of her the best he could and he thought that the doctors did as well
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes
 - Cannot cook and cannot do his laundry
 - He had to learn how to pay his bills now, his wife always took care of that
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - His daughter helps him with his laundry, picks it up once a week washes it and returns them to him
 - His sister in law also helps him with his house cleaning and brings him some food
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He misses his wife and says that he needs her, you need a woman to help you. He will tell you.
- xX-Adaptation
 - Keeping busy after his spouse has passed keeps everything off of his mind
 - Being rational about the situation, he said that it is going to happen to all of us, we just have to accept that about life

Farmer #6

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - Tobacco Buyout-had to increase cattle production to offset
 - Not owning the whole farm until later on in life
 - His wife's battle with cancer limited her ability to help on the farm for several years
- b-Existing Resources
 - Having her family in the farming business allowed them to farm more than they could with just him and his wife
 - Had four sons that all helped on the farm as well as his wife
- c-Perception of "a"
 - Tobacco buyout was welcomed but brought about change
 - Took care of his family, wife and kids before the farm
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Severely downsized his operation to take care of his kids
 - Lost his partner in his wife and partner on the farming operation
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Enough money saved up that he was able to downsize and take care of his boys
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - His boys needed him and they needed somebody to be there all of the time and he just made sure that he had the time to do it
- xX-Adaptation
 - Relied on his sons and friends and family to help him on the farm now that his partner had passed

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - Money problems were their biggest issue in the home, struggled to pay the bills in the home and the farm together
 - Her battle with cancer limited her ability to do the things in the home she always took care of
- b-Existing Resources
 - They always made it a point to do things together so when she got sick he was able to pick up some of the work she was unable to do because he already knew how to do most of it
 - Her job as a teacher really helped with the finances
- c-Perception of "a"
 - He thought that it was his duty to take care of her and his boys first over everything else

- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He and his sons had to start doing things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes, etc.
 - Stress of taking care of four boys by himself
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - His already knowing how to do some things in the home since he and his worked as a team
 - Had family members from both sides of his and her family available to help him out when needed
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He thinks that the whole process really made himself and his three sons much, much closer
- xX-Adaptation
 - He and his sons just learned to stick together and help each other

Farmer #7

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - Diversity of crops meant that they were frequently changing farming practice directions
 - His wife's busy schedule as a missionary and was not able to help on the farm very much
 - He and her both had health problems
- b-Existing Resources
 - His retirement from being a truck driver and then being able to farm full time with a retirement pension to fall back on
- c-Perception of "a"
 - He farmed because he enjoyed it and he wanted to support his wife and her cause of being a missionary
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - His inability now to do all of the farm work that needed doing because of the loss of his spouse and added responsibilities
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - His niece and local farmers are there to help him when he needs them
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
- The biggest thing he hates to see on his farm is it growing up in some places because he doesn't have enough time to keep it up
- xX-Adaptation

- Continuing to attend church and his niece and her children are what have kept him going

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - Her rheumatoid arthritis limited what she could do
 - His health as well, he had two strokes and one heart attack
- b-Existing Resources
 - They were financially stable enough to take care of their doctor bills
- c-Perception of “a”
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes, etc
 - The lack of visits from her side of the family and friends now that she has passed away
- bB-Existing and New Resources
- cC-Perception of x + aA + bB
- xX-Adaptation
 - His niece has helped him tremendously as well as his church
 - He feels like that only the Lord can help you through something like losing your wife

Farmer #8

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - The tobacco buyout-had to increase cattle production to offset
 - The swift expansion of the farming operation, increased rapidly
- b-Existing Resources
 - Had the availability of land to expand his operation
 - Money from tobacco buyout to continue operation
- c-Perception of “a”
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Turned the day to day operating of the farm over to his son
 - His health and age to be able to do what he wants on the farm
- bB-Existing and New Resources

- His son taking over the farming operation and allowing him to semi-retire
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He knew that he was going to have to hang it up one day but having his son to take over allowed him to do that
- xX-Adaptation

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - Not being able to have children, put in for adoption then she got pregnant with their only son
 - Buying and owning a business in town
- b-Existing Resources
 - She took care of the store and he took care of the farm that was the deal
- c-Perception of “a”
 - Once they had their child they built their whole lives around their son
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Added attention from family and friends when his wife passed away that he was not use to
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, dishes, sorting clothes, etc.
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Moved in with his son, they built him an apartment onto the side of his home
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He told his family you have got to leave me alone and let me work this out myself
 - He said that he had the best so why would he want to try anything else
- xX-Adaptation
 - His grandchildren are the reason that he has gotten through the loss of his spouse
 - He uses common sense in getting through his spousal loss

Farmer #9

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - Rapid expansion of the farm
 - His wife wanting to expand the farm and he really did not want to at times
 - Her battle with cancer decreased her ability to be the co-farmer
- b-Existing Resources
 - Their only daughter always loved the farm and was right there to help with everything
 - Wife continued to help the farm out from the home
- c-Perception of “a”
 - Without his wife he would not have advanced the farm as much, she was up on technology and she helped him with every step
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He gets a later start to the day on the farm because of his added responsibilities in the home
 - His bookkeeper was gone as well, so he had to start doing all the books
 - Refinancing everything because of the loss of his wife’s income
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - He could call on his daughter to help on the farm as well as other farmers and friends in the area
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He had no idea what challenges he would face when his wife passed away on the farm
- xX-Adaptation
 - Teaching his grandson about the farm and seeing him all excited about the farm has gotten him through his tough time

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - The lack of money and high interest rates made them pay for things twice before they owned them
 - Her battle with cancer
- b-Existing Resources
 - Her income from being an accountant
 - Their daughter being able to help out in the home during her sickness
- c-Perception of “a”
 - She did it all, everything in the home
- x-Crisis

- Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes, etc.
 - He had to take over the record keeping and bill paying that he had never done before
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - His daughter helps him some with the house work
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He knew she was sick and might not make it but he said there was no way that he could have been prepared for losing his wife
- xX-Adaptation
 - He believes that his Grandson is a Godsend because he has really helped him get through the losing of his spouse

Farmer #10

Farming Operation

- a-Stressor
 - His lack of never having worked on a farm and immediately starting to work for her father on the farm
 - Her lack of interest to help out on the farm
- b-Existing Resources
 - Having her father to work for after he got out of the Army
 - Her father gave them 65 cows to start off with
- c-Perception of “a”
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - Had to hire a lawyer to handle all of the farming operation legalities after his wife passed away
 - Passed the farm off to one of his sons to manage full time
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Having his son there to take over the farm
 - Being financially stable enough to hire a lawyer to help him settle some legal issues
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He had his farm hands and son to run the farm so he could focus on recovering from losing his wife
- xX-Adaptation
 - Trying to stay busy and keep it off his mind

Family Life

- a-Stressor
 - He worked late and wasn't much of a companion
 - Her battle with cancer limited what she could do in the home
- b-Existing Resources
 - They had their kids to help take care of things in the home and with her sickness
- c-Perception of "a"
 - He felt bad because he wasn't a better companion for his wife
- x-Crisis
 - Death of spouse
- aA-Pile up
 - He had to do things she always did in the home, laundry, cooking, sorting clothes, etc.
- bB-Existing and New Resources
 - Having their kids to help him in the home
 - He is an independent person and that helped him because he learned quickly his new tasks
- cC-Perception of $x + aA + bB$
 - He can handle the extra chores in the home but it is the loneliness that he struggles with daily
- xX-Adaptation
 - Having a strong faith in God and great church family has really helped get him through his wife passing away

Appendix F

Common Themes List for Farming Operation and Family Life

	Farm	Family
Pre-Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Health Issues for the Wife •Tobacco Buyout •Monetary Payments on the Farm •Wife's Continued Support of the Farm •Having Children Help with the Farm •Money from the Tobacco Buyout •Farming is a tough way to make a living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Health Issues •Monetary Problems •Family Members Ability to Help •Wife's Off-Farm Work •Wife did Everything in the Home •Battle with Sickness Didn't Stop their Lives
	Crisis	
Post-Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Downsizing of the Operation •Turning the Farm Over to Children •Farm Work Piling Up •Family Member to Call on to Help with the Farm •Missed Teammate •Changing Identity as a Farmer •Finding others to Help on the Farm •Trying to Stay Busy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Had to Start doing Everything the Wife had done •Family Support •Church Family •Family Members Belong in their Homes •Lonesome Life •Doing what Works

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